



MILAAP – ITF SEAFARERS' EXPO 2026

Comprehensive Report on Participation and Engagement of the Directorate General of Shipping





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026**, conducted from **29 to 31 January 2026** at **Princess Dock, Mumbai**, represented a landmark moment in India’s maritime welfare landscape. Conceived as one of the largest dedicated outreach and engagement platforms for seafarers and their families, the Expo brought together government authorities, international organisations, maritime unions, industry experts, welfare institutions, and the seafaring community under one unified framework.



Organised by the **International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF)** with active participation of Indian maritime unions and institutional support from the **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)**, the Expo was designed to place **seafarer welfare, dignity, safety, and wellbeing** at the centre of maritime governance.

The Expo was inaugurated on **29 January 2026** in the distinguished presence of:

- **Shri Sameer Kumar Khare (IAS, Retd.)**, Chairperson, **National Shipping Board**, as **Chief Guest**, and



- **Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS**, Director General of Shipping, as **Guest of Honour**.

The Directorate General of Shipping played a **central, visible, and substantive role** throughout the Expo. Through leadership participation, policy announcements, scheme launches, technical sessions, wellness initiatives, and direct engagement at its dedicated pavilions, DGS reinforced its evolving role as both a maritime regulator and a custodian of seafarer welfare.

Major outcomes of the Expo included:

- Formal launch and rationalisation of multiple **Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS)** schemes
- Introduction of new lifecycle-oriented welfare initiatives
- Policy clarity on grievance redressal, abandonment handling, and regulatory reforms
- High-quality dialogue on fair treatment, ethical recruitment, and mental wellbeing
- Large-scale outreach to seafarers, cadets, families, and maritime professionals

The Expo successfully demonstrated that maritime governance, when combined with cultural sensitivity, institutional accessibility, and global collaboration, can meaningfully enhance the lives and confidence of seafarers. The proceedings over three days created a robust foundation for sustained engagement, continuous reform, and people-centric maritime development.



1.INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



India is one of the world's largest suppliers of skilled seafarers, with Indian maritime professionals serving across international fleets and contributing significantly to global trade, logistics, and supply chains. While this global engagement underscores India's maritime strength, it also places an obligation on national institutions to ensure that Indian seafarers operate within a framework that guarantees **fair treatment, safety, welfare, and dignity**.

Recognising this responsibility, the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026** was conceptualised as a comprehensive engagement platform that moved beyond conventional conferences or exhibitions. The Expo was designed as a **people-centric forum**, combining welfare outreach, regulatory awareness, wellness initiatives, cultural recognition, and technical capacity building.

The choice of **Princess Dock, Mumbai** as the venue held symbolic significance. Mumbai has historically been a maritime gateway and home to generations of seafarers and coastal communities. Hosting the Expo at this location reinforced



the connection between India's maritime heritage and its contemporary seafaring workforce.

The Expo sought to:

- Provide **direct access** to welfare schemes and institutional support
- Enable **dialogue between seafarers and regulators**
- Promote **mental and physical wellbeing** through structured programmes
- Address contemporary challenges such as abandonment, criminalisation, and unethical recruitment
- Align national practices with international labour standards, particularly the **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006**

The **Directorate General of Shipping**, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India, participated as a key institutional stakeholder, ensuring that policy intent translated into accessible, on-ground support for the seafaring community.



2. OVERVIEW OF EXPO STRUCTURE AND INAUGURAL DAY DESIGN



2.1 Conceptual Design of the Expo

The MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026 was conceptualised as a **multi-dimensional engagement platform**, distinct from conventional maritime conferences or trade exhibitions. Rather than focusing on commercial displays or policy-only dialogue, the Expo was designed around the **lived realities of seafarers and their families**, integrating welfare outreach, regulatory awareness, wellness, culture, and community participation.

The structure of the Expo reflected a deliberate design philosophy:

- **People before policy**
- **Access before articulation**
- **Dialogue before declaration**



This approach ensured that seafarers were not passive attendees, but **active participants**, able to engage directly with institutions, ask questions, seek clarifications, and experience tangible support.





2.2 Institutional Architecture and Stakeholder Participation

The Expo brought together a wide spectrum of stakeholders, each contributing to a shared welfare ecosystem:

- **Government and Regulators**
 - Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)
 - Allied statutory and welfare bodies
- **International Organisations**
 - International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)
 - International Labour Organization (ILO)
- **Seafarer Unions**
 - National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI)
 - Maritime Union of India (MUI)
 - Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI)
- **Maritime Industry & Institutions**
 - Training institutes
 - Medical and safety professionals
 - Welfare and counselling organisations
- **Primary Beneficiaries**
 - Serving seafarers
 - Retired seafarers
 - Families and dependents
 - Cadets and maritime students

This layered participation ensured that the Expo functioned not merely as an event, but as a **temporary welfare ecosystem**, mirroring the real-world interactions between seafarers and institutions.



2.3 Day-wise Structuring of the Expo

The three-day Expo was deliberately structured to build momentum and depth:

- **Day-1:**
Ceremonial foundation, institutional commitment, policy announcements, and high-level dialogue.
- **Day-2:**
Technical sessions, scheme-wise engagement, safety, medical, and regulatory awareness.
- **Day-3:**
International perspectives, counselling, legal aid, medical outreach, and closing reflections.

Within this structure, **Day-1** held particular importance, as it was designed to:

- Establish the ethos of the Expo
- Signal government commitment at the highest level
- Introduce welfare reforms and initiatives
- Set expectations for dialogue and collaboration

2.4 Significance of the Inaugural Day

The inaugural day was not treated as a ceremonial formality alone. Instead, it was carefully curated to blend **symbolism with substance**.

The opening activities were intended to:

- Honour maritime tradition and coastal culture
- Acknowledge the dignity of seafarers as a professional community
- Demonstrate institutional accessibility and openness
- Provide clarity on welfare reforms and regulatory intent



The design ensured that every ceremonial element carried meaning, and every formal address was backed by **tangible action or policy direction**.

2.5 Transition from Concept to Experience

By the time visitors entered the Expo grounds on **29 January 2026**, the structure and layout already communicated the central message: that ***seafarer welfare is not an abstract policy objective, but a lived institutional responsibility***.

This transition from conceptual design to on-ground experience was most clearly visible in:

- The traditional welcome accorded to dignitaries
- The cultural performances rooted in maritime heritage
- The immediate opening of welfare and guidance pavilions
- The presence of senior decision-makers engaging directly with participants

These elements collectively prepared the ground for the **Day-1 ceremonial welcome and inaugural proceedings**, detailed in the next section.

2.6 Positioning of Day-1 within the Overall Narrative

Day-1 served as the **emotional and institutional anchor** of the Expo. It established:

- Trust between seafarers and institutions
- Legitimacy of the dialogue that followed
- Confidence that welfare announcements would be action-oriented

The success of subsequent technical sessions and beneficiary engagement was rooted in the credibility and tone set during this opening day.



3.DAY-1 CEREMONIAL WELCOME AND CULTURAL OPENING

3.1 Setting the Tone for the Inaugural Day

The first day of the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026 began with a carefully curated ceremonial welcome that reflected the values of respect, gratitude, and collective responsibility towards seafarers. The opening proceedings were designed not merely as a formal protocol, but as a meaningful expression of India’s maritime ethos and the Government’s commitment to the people who serve at sea.

From the moment dignitaries arrived at the venue, the atmosphere conveyed that the Expo was by the seafaring community, for the seafaring community. The ceremonial opening set a calm yet dignified tone, ensuring that the focus of the days ahead would remain firmly centred on seafarer welfare, dignity, and wellbeing.



3.2 Traditional Welcome of Chief Guest, Guest of Honour and Dignitaries





The **Chief Guest, Sameer Kumar Khare (IAS, Retd.)**, Chairperson, **National Shipping Board**, and the **Guest of Honour, Shyam Jagannathan, IAS**, Director General of Shipping, were accorded a warm and traditional welcome upon their arrival at the Expo venue.

The dignitaries were received with a **Tilak Ceremony**, symbolising respect, goodwill, and auspicious beginnings. The gesture reflected the maritime administration's acknowledgement of leadership and service, while also setting a tone of humility and inclusiveness.

Senior national and international maritime dignitaries, representatives of the **International Transport Workers' Federation**, the **International Labour Organization**, seafarer unions, and welfare organisations were also welcomed as



part of the opening ceremony, reinforcing the collective and collaborative character of the event.

3.3 Ceremonial Band March

Following the Tilak ceremony, a **ceremonial band march** was conducted around the Expo grounds. The march marked the **formal commencement of the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026** and added a sense of structure, pride, and solemnity to the proceedings.

The rhythmic movement of the band through the venue symbolised discipline, unity, and shared purpose and values deeply associated with life at sea. The march also served as a visual and auditory announcement that the Expo had officially begun, drawing the attention of attendees and creating an atmosphere of collective anticipation.

For many seafarers and cadets present, the band march evoked familiarity and pride, resonating with the traditions of maritime service and reinforcing a sense of belonging within the larger maritime community.

3.4 Cultural Opening: Traditional Koli Folk Dance

The opening of the inaugural session was marked by a **traditional Koli folk dance performance**, celebrating the rich maritime heritage of Mumbai and its coastal communities. The Koli community, historically connected to the sea, represents resilience, skill, and an enduring relationship with maritime livelihoods.

The performance provided a cultural bridge between the city’s maritime past and the contemporary global seafaring workforce. It underscored the message that while shipping today is global and technologically advanced, it remains rooted in communities whose lives and identities are shaped by the sea.



The cultural presentation was warmly received by seafarers, families, and dignitaries alike, adding depth and emotional resonance to the opening of the Expo.



3.5 Symbolism and Institutional Significance

Each element of the ceremonial welcome carried symbolic meaning:

- The **Tilak Ceremony** represented respect and gratitude for leadership and service.
- The **Band March** reflected discipline, unity, and shared purpose.
- The **Koli Folk Dance** honoured maritime heritage and community identity.

Together, these elements conveyed a clear message: that the Expo was not merely an administrative or policy-driven event, but a **people-first initiative** grounded in culture, tradition, and care for those who serve at sea.



3.6 Transition to Formal Inaugural Proceedings



The ceremonial welcome and cultural opening seamlessly transitioned into the formal inaugural proceedings of the Expo. The dignified beginning helped establish an environment of openness and mutual respect, enabling meaningful engagement during the subsequent inauguration, policy announcements, and discussions.

For the Directorate General of Shipping, this opening reaffirmed a core principle: that **effective maritime governance begins with respect, empathy, and recognition of the human dimension of seafaring.**



4. INAUGURATION OF THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING STALL

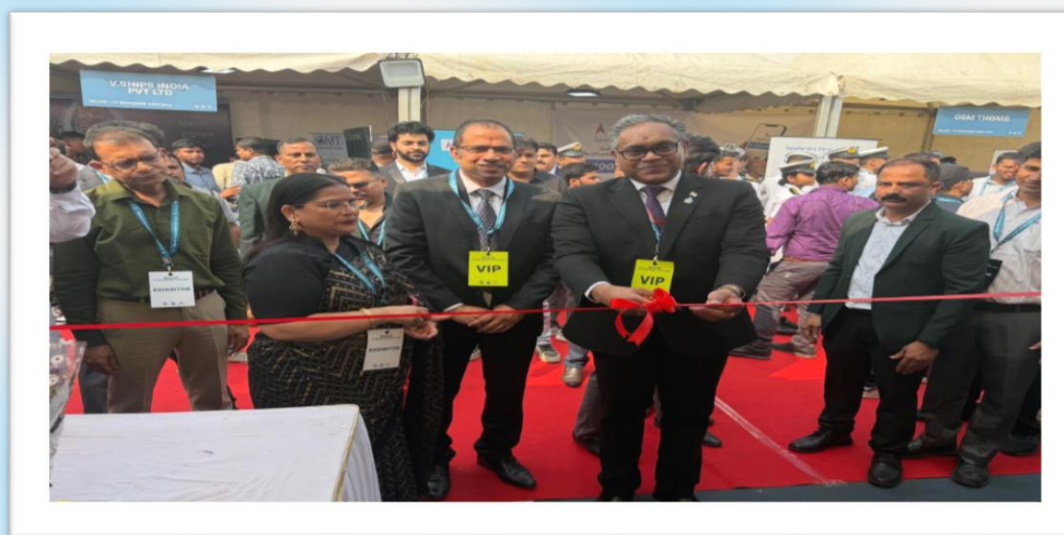
4.1 Significance of the DGS Pavilion

The inauguration of the **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) stall** on **29 January 2026** marked a pivotal moment in the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026. More than an exhibition space, the DGS stall was conceived as a **single-window institutional interface**, where seafarers and their families could directly engage with the maritime administration on matters affecting their professional lives, welfare, and wellbeing.

The stall symbolised the Government of India’s commitment to **accessible, transparent, and responsive maritime governance**, reinforcing the message that regulatory institutions must remain approachable and grounded in the realities of those they serve.



4.2 Formal Inauguration of the DGS Stall



The DGS stall was formally inaugurated by Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Shipping, in the presence of Capt. Nitin Mukesh, Dy. Nautical Advisor cum Senior DDG Crew and senior national and international dignitaries, representatives of seafarer unions, welfare organisations, and maritime professionals.

The inauguration signified the formal commencement of DGS's on-ground engagement at the Expo and set the stage for three days of direct interaction, guidance, and service delivery.



During the inauguration, the Director General emphasised that the stall was intended to function as:

- A **help and guidance desk** for seafarers and families
- A **knowledge centre** for welfare schemes and regulatory processes
- A **listening post** for concerns, feedback, and lived experience

4.3 Design and Layout of the DGS Stall

The DGS stall was thoughtfully designed to ensure **clarity, accessibility, and ease of movement** for visitors. The layout adopted an **integrated welfare model**, bringing together multiple initiatives under a cohesive visual and functional framework.

The stall prominently featured dedicated sections for:

- **Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS)**
- **Seamen's Provident Fund Organisation (SPFO)**
- **Welfare and wellness initiatives**, including *Sagar Mein Yog*
- **Gender dignity and inclusivity initiatives**, including *Sagar Mein Samman*
- **Grievance redressal and regulatory guidance**, including MLC compliance

Clear signage, informative panels, and printed materials enabled visitors to navigate the stall independently, while trained officers remained available to provide personalised assistance.

4.4 Officer Presence and Institutional Accessibility

A key feature of the DGS stall was the **continuous presence of senior and mid-level officers** from the Directorate General of Shipping and associated welfare



bodies. Their presence ensured that visitors received **authoritative, accurate, and empathetic guidance.**

Officers engaged with visitors on a wide range of issues, including:

- Eligibility and application procedures for welfare schemes
- Provident fund contributions, withdrawals, and settlements
- Reporting and handling of abandonment cases
- Grievance redressal mechanisms and timelines
- Clarification of regulatory requirements and compliance



This direct interaction helped bridge the gap between policy and practice, reinforcing trust in institutional mechanisms.



4.5 Engagement with Seafarers and Families



The DGS stall witnessed **steady and sustained footfall** throughout Day-1, with visitors including serving seafarers, retired seafarers, family members, cadets, and maritime students.

Many visitors appreciated the opportunity to:

- Seek clarification on long-standing welfare or PF issues
- Understand recent reforms and scheme enhancements
- Receive guidance in simple, non-technical language

Family members, particularly spouses and dependents, engaged actively on welfare and survivor benefit schemes, highlighting the importance of inclusive outreach that recognises the family as a central stakeholder in seafarer welfare.



4.6 Symbolic and Practical Importance

The inauguration and functioning of the DGS stall sent a strong message that **the maritime administration stands alongside seafarers**, not at a distance. By situating decision-makers and service providers within the Expo space, DGS demonstrated a governance model rooted in **listening, dialogue, and service**.

For many seafarers, the stall represented more than an information counter, it embodied reassurance, recognition, and a sense of institutional care.

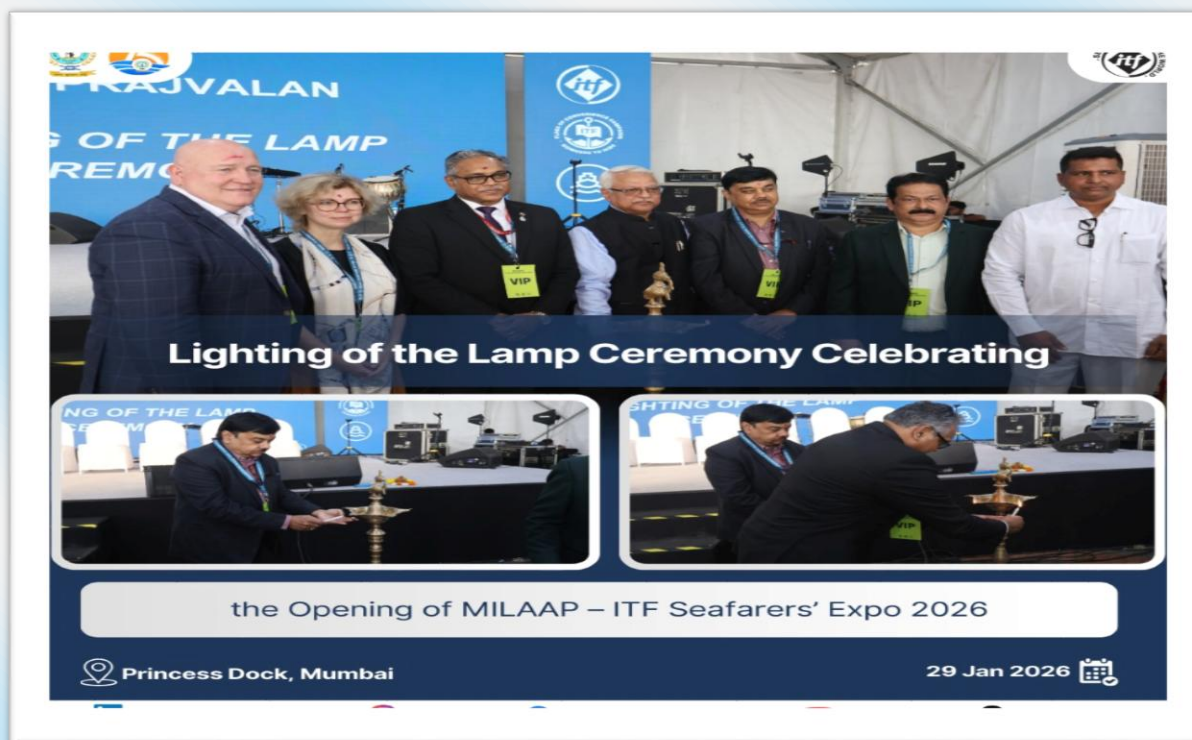
4.7 Transition to Policy Announcements and Scheme Launches

Following the inauguration of the DGS stall, attention naturally shifted to the **policy-oriented segments of Day-1**, including the unveiling of the SWFS logo and the announcement of significant welfare scheme reforms and new initiatives.

The stall continued to serve as a live reference point during these announcements, enabling immediate dissemination of information and on-the-spot clarification for visitors.



5.LIGHTING OF THE LAMP CEREMONY



5.1 Ceremonial Significance

The **Lighting of the Lamp Ceremony**, held on **29 January 2026**, marked the **formal and symbolic commencement** of the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026. Rooted in Indian tradition, the ceremony signified **knowledge, enlightenment, unity, and collective responsibility**, values that resonate deeply with the ethos of maritime service and seafaring life.



The ceremony served as a moment of reflection and purpose, reminding all present that the deliberations and engagements of the Expo were anchored in the shared objective of **improving the welfare, dignity, and wellbeing of seafarers.**



5.2 Dignitaries Participating in the Ceremony

The ceremonial lamp was lit by a distinguished group of national and international leaders, reflecting the collaborative and inclusive nature of the Expo. The dignitaries who participated in the Lighting of the Lamp were:

- **Shri Sameer Kumar Khare (IAS, Retd.)**, Chairperson, **National Shipping Board** — *Chief Guest*
- **Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS**, Director General of Shipping — *Guest of Honour*



- **Shri Stephen Cotton**, General Secretary, **International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)**
- **Smt. Elena Gerasimova**, Labour Law and Labour Standards Specialist, **ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia, International Labour Organization**
- **Shri Milind Kandalgaonkar**, General Secretary-cum-Treasurer, **National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI)**
- **Capt Savio Ramos**, General Secretary, **Maritime Union of India (MUI)**
- **Shri Manoj Yadav**, General Secretary, **Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI)**

The collective presence of government leadership, international labour institutions, and representative unions underscored the **shared stewardship of seafarer welfare** across jurisdictions and organisational boundaries.





5.3 Message Conveyed Through the Ceremony

The Lighting of the Lamp symbolised the **coming together of policy, practice, and people**. Each participant represented a distinct yet interconnected pillar of the maritime ecosystem:

- **Government and regulation**, ensuring safety, compliance, and welfare delivery
- **International labour organisations**, safeguarding rights and global standards
- **Unions**, representing the collective voice and lived experiences of seafarers

The act of jointly lighting the lamp conveyed a powerful message: that seafarer welfare cannot be advanced in isolation, but requires **continuous cooperation, dialogue, and shared responsibility**.

5.4 Transition to Formal Inaugural Proceedings

Following the Lighting of the Lamp Ceremony, the Expo transitioned seamlessly into the formal inaugural proceedings, including keynote addresses and policy announcements. The solemnity and symbolism of the ceremony helped anchor the discussions that followed in a spirit of respect, openness, and collective purpose.

For the Directorate General of Shipping, the ceremony reaffirmed a guiding principle of maritime governance: that ***“regulation must be informed by empathy, and policy must be illuminated by human values”***.



5.5 Foundation for the Day's Deliberations

The Lighting of the Lamp Ceremony provided a reflective pause before the commencement of substantive discussions on welfare reforms, regulatory challenges, and international cooperation. It reinforced the understanding that behind every policy framework and institutional mechanism are **individual seafarers and families whose lives are directly impacted**.

This symbolic beginning laid a strong foundation for the announcements, dialogues, and engagements that followed during Day-1 of the Expo.





6. UNVEILING OF THE SEAFARERS' WELFARE FUND SOCIETY (SWFS) LOGO AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF WELFARE SCHEME REFORMS



Logo Unveiling Ceremony of SWFS at MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026





6.1 Context and Institutional Importance

The **unveiling of the Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS) logo** during the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026 represented a defining institutional moment in India's maritime welfare landscape. Far beyond a visual identity launch, the occasion marked the culmination of a comprehensive policy review and reform exercise aimed at **strengthening the social security net for Indian seafarers and their families**.

The decision to unveil the SWFS logo at an international platform such as MILAAP was deliberate. It reflected the Government of India's intent to present seafarer welfare as a **central pillar of maritime governance**, aligned with international labour standards and responsive to evolving realities of seafaring life.

6.2 Protocol and Ceremony of Logo Unveiling

The SWFS logo was formally unveiled on **29 January 2026** by:

- **Shri Sameer Kumar Khare (IAS, Retd.)**, Chairperson, **National Shipping Board** — *Chief Guest*
- **Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS**, Director General of Shipping — *Guest of Honour*

The unveiling ceremony was attended by senior officials of the Directorate General of Shipping, representatives of the International Transport Workers' Federation, International Labour Organization, seafarer unions, and maritime stakeholders.

The joint unveiling by the Chief Guest and Guest of Honour symbolised **institutional continuity and collective ownership** of the welfare framework; bridging policy guidance, regulatory execution, and stakeholder participation.



6.3 Symbolism and Meaning of the SWFS Logo

The newly unveiled SWFS logo was designed to encapsulate the core values and objectives of the Society. Its visual elements collectively represented:

- **Protection and security** for seafarers and their families
- **Continuity of support** across the seafarer's professional lifecycle
- **Maritime identity**, reflecting service at sea
- **Collective responsibility**, involving Government, industry, unions, and society

The logo served as a unifying symbol for all SWFS initiatives, reinforcing clarity, recognition, and trust among beneficiaries.

6.4 Governance Process Leading to Welfare Reforms

The unveiling of the logo coincided with the **formal announcement of major welfare scheme reforms and new scheme launches** under SWFS. These reforms were the outcome of structured deliberations held at the **Sub-Committee of the Committee of Management (CoM) of SWFS** on 27 January 2026.



The governance process was marked by:

- Participation of officials from the Directorate General of Shipping
- Representation from shipowners' associations
- Active involvement of seafarer unions
- Financial and administrative scrutiny of the SWFS corpus

Each scheme was examined in detail to ensure:

- **Adequacy** of benefits in current economic conditions
- **Clarity** of eligibility and timelines
- **Equity** in access for genuine beneficiaries
- **Sustainability** of the welfare fund

Except for one proposal deferred for further formulation, all recommendations were approved by consensus.



6.5 RATIONALE FOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME RATIONALISATION UNDER SWFS



6.5.1 Background and Need for Rationalisation

The Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS) has, over the years, evolved into a critical social security instrument for Indian seafarers and their families. However, welfare frameworks that span decades inevitably face challenges arising from **changing economic realities, evolving employment patterns, medical advancements, and social expectations.**

Prior to the present reform exercise, several SWFS schemes; though well-intentioned were constrained by:

- **Outdated benefit quantum**, no longer aligned with present-day costs
- **Rigid eligibility timelines**, which did not reflect practical realities faced by seafarers and families



- **Fragmented coverage**, addressing welfare events in isolation rather than across a lifecycle
- **Procedural rigidity**, which inadvertently excluded genuine beneficiaries

The Directorate General of Shipping therefore undertook a **systematic and compassionate review** of all SWFS schemes to ensure that welfare delivery remains **relevant, equitable, humane, and sustainable**.

6.5.2 Core Philosophy Guiding the Rationalisation

The rationalisation exercise was guided by four foundational principles:

1. Human-Centric Design

Welfare schemes must reflect the lived realities of seafarers and their families, especially during periods of crisis, illness, maternity, education, or old age.

2. Lifecycle-Based Support

Welfare should not be episodic. Instead, it must support a seafarer:

- during active service,
- through injury or illness,
- across family responsibilities,
- and into dignified old age.

3. Adequacy and Timeliness

Benefits must be **financially meaningful** and accessible within **realistic timelines**, without forcing beneficiaries into distress-driven procedural hurdles.

4. Institutional Sustainability

Enhancements must be balanced against the long-term financial health of the SWFS corpus, ensuring continued support for future generations of seafarers.



6.5.3 Rationale for Enhancement of Benefit Amounts

Several SWFS schemes had benefit values fixed many years earlier. Inflation, rising healthcare costs, increased education expenses, and higher cost of living had significantly eroded their real value.

Accordingly:

- **Survivor's Benefit** was enhanced progressively to ₹6,00,000, recognising that the loss of a seafarer often removes the sole earning member of the family. The revised amount aims to provide **meaningful transitional financial stability**, rather than symbolic assistance.
- **Invalidity Benefit** enhancements acknowledged that permanent disability frequently entails long-term medical expenses, loss of employability, and dependence on family members.
- **Maternity Benefit** enhancement directly addressed the disproportionate economic burden faced by women seafarers during maternity, signalling institutional commitment to **gender dignity and retention of women in maritime careers**.
- **Education-related benefits** were increased to reflect the actual cost of pre-sea training, higher education, and professional mobility.

These enhancements ensured that welfare assistance remains **substantive rather than nominal**.



Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS) Schemes

Survivor's Benefit Scheme (SBS)

- ₹6,00,000 for death occurred on/after 27.01.2026(earlier: ₹4,00,000 on/after 29.04.2024; ₹2,00,000 on/after 16.03.2016).
- Death within 36 months off-article period for death occurred on/after 27.01.2026 (earlier: 24 months w.e.f. 29.04.2024).
- Paid to nominee registered for last voyage; last engagement through Indian Shipping Co./RPSL.
- Claim within 3 years from date of death.

Invalidity Benefit Scheme (IBS)

- ₹6,00,000 for permanent disability on/after 29.04.2024(loss of limbs cases only).
- Permanent unfitness due to accidental injury within 36 months off-article for injury occurred on/after 27.01.2026(earlier: 24 months w.e.f. 29.04.2024).
- Claim within 3 years from date of certificate issued by DGS approved medical practitioner.

Maternity Benefit Scheme (MBS)

- Only for Indian women seafarers with sea service through Indian Shipping Co./RPSL.
- ₹50,000 per delivery for delivery occurred on/after 27.01.2026(earlier: ₹25,000); max 2 deliveries.
- Claim within 2 years of delivery.

Family Benefit Welfare Scheme (FBS) (education support)

- ₹1,00,000 on completion of Pre-Sea training (DGS approved institute) & obtains CDC (on/after 27.01.2026).

5. Old Age Benefit Scheme (OABS)

(a) Age 65 (on/after 01.01.2019): ₹50,000

- Indian CDC holder; CDC to be cancelled; apply within 12 months of attaining 65.
- Sea service: min 6 months after age 50 through Indian Shipping Co./RPSL (as amended).

(b) Age 75 (on/after 01.01.2026): ₹1,00,000

- Eligible Indian CDC holder; apply within 12 months of attaining 75.

6. Death on Board Benefit Scheme (DBBS) (w.e.f. 12.03.2025)

- ₹2,00,000 ex-gratia to nominee registered for the vessel.
- Applicable for death/presumed death on board on/after 12.03.2025.
- Indian CDC holder + bonafide employment through Indian Shipping Co./RPSL; apply within 3 months of death/missing.

7. Ex-Gratia Support Benefit Scheme (ESBS) (w.e.f. 12.03.2025)

- ₹10,000/month (amended to ₹20,000/month for families of seafarers abandoned/stranded on/after 01.01.2026).

- Payable to nominee for max 12 months / till abandonment date (whichever earlier).
- Assistance paid after 2 months of being stranded (based on local confirmation).
- Apply within 2 months from date of stranded/abandonment.

8. Award to Meritorious Child of Seafarers (AMCS) (w.e.f. 12.03.2025)

- ₹25,000 cash award for child who tops in full-time Degree/PG Degree (non-maritime) from Indian University.
- Apply within 2 months of university confirmation.

A. Medical & Term Insurance Premium Assistance – Reimbursement of 50% premium up to ₹5,000 (₹3,000 medical + ₹1,000 critical illness + ₹1,000 term), for Indian CDC holders meeting sea-service criteria; apply before 60 days of policy lapse.

B. Medical Support (Critical/Terminal illness) – One-time ₹2,00,000; govt/recognised hospital certification; apply within 6 months of medical certificate.

C. CoC Career Progression (Rating → Officer) – One-time assistance up to ₹2,00,000 after successful issue of Indian CoC/CoP by DG Shipping.

To download the Welfare Scheme Application Form, Scan the QR Code.

Important Contacts:
SWFS Email ID: swfs1966@gmail.com, swfs.dgs@govcontractor.in
022-20826980, 022-22626981

6.5.3.a. Survivor's Benefit Scheme (SBS)

The **Survivor's Benefit Scheme (SBS)** provides financial assistance to the family or nominee of a deceased seafarer. The scheme has undergone phased enhancement to ensure adequacy and relevance in light of increasing financial responsibilities borne by the family upon the death of a seafarer.

Under the existing framework, the benefit amount was ₹2,00,000 for deaths occurring on or after 16.03.2016, which was amended to ₹4,00,000 for deaths occurring on or after 29.04.2024. In order to further strengthen financial support to bereaved families, the benefit amount has been **further amended to ₹6,00,000 for deaths occurring on or after 27.01.2026.**

The eligibility condition relating to the off-article period has also been rationalised. While earlier eligibility was restricted to death occurring within 24 months of the off-article period w.e.f. 29.04.2024, this has now been **extended to 36 months off-article period** in respect of deaths occurring on or after



27.01.2026. This rationalisation takes into account practical delays arising from medical treatment, investigation, and reporting of death.

The benefit continues to be payable to the **nominee registered for the last voyage before death**, subject to the condition that the deceased seafarer was last engaged through an **Indian Shipping Company or RPSL**. The claim submission timeline of **three years from the date of death** remains unchanged, ensuring adequate time for families to complete procedural formalities.

6.5.3.b. Invalidity Benefit Scheme (IBS)

The **Invalidity Benefit Scheme (IBS)** provides financial assistance to seafarers who are rendered permanently unfit due to accidental injury.

Under the scheme, the benefit amount was ₹2,00,000 for permanent disability occurring on or after 16.03.2016 and was enhanced to ₹6,00,000 for permanent disability occurring on or after 29.04.2024, specifically in cases involving **loss of limbs**.

The eligibility condition relating to permanent unfitness due to accidental injury has been rationalised. Earlier, eligibility was limited to injuries occurring within 24 months of the off-article period w.e.f. 29.04.2024. This has now been **extended to 36 months off-article period** in respect of accidental injuries occurring on or after 27.01.2026, recognising that determination of permanent disability often requires prolonged medical treatment and assessment.

Claims under the scheme continue to be required to be submitted **within three years from the date of certification** issued by a **DGS-approved medical practitioner**.



6.5.3.c. Maternity Benefit Scheme (MBS)

The **Maternity Benefit Scheme (MBS)** provides financial assistance to Indian women seafarers during maternity. The scheme is applicable only to Indian female seafarers who have rendered sea service through an Indian Shipping Company or RPSL within **60 months prior to delivery**.

Earlier, the maternity benefit was ₹25,000 per delivery, with a maximum limit of two deliveries. In order to better reflect prevailing medical and living expenses, the benefit amount has been **amended to ₹50,000 per delivery** for deliveries occurring on or after **27.01.2026**, while retaining the cap of two deliveries.

The claim submission timeline of **two years from the date of delivery** remains unchanged.

6.5.3.d. Family Benefit Welfare Scheme (FBS)

The **Family Benefit Welfare Scheme (FBS)** provides educational assistance to the children of Indian seafarers.

Under the scheme, educational assistance of ₹50,000 was earlier provided to a daughter or son of the seafarer on completion of a **Pre-Sea Training Course from a DGS-approved Training Institute and obtaining CDC**. This amount has now been **amended to ₹1,00,000** for completion of pre-sea training courses on or after **27.01.2026**, recognising the rising cost of maritime education.

Additionally, educational assistance of ₹25,000 for completion of a full-time two-year postgraduate degree or diploma course (non-maritime stream) from an Indian University or AICTE-approved institution has been **amended to ₹50,000** for course completion on or after 27.01.2026.

The eligibility requirement of a minimum **six months sea service after 01.04.2014** remains applicable. Applications under the scheme are required to be



submitted **within 12 months from the date of course completion or receipt of certificate.**

6.5.3.e. Old Age Benefit Scheme (OABS)

i. Old Age Benefit Scheme – Age 65 Years

The **Old Age Benefit Scheme (OABS)** provides one-time financial support to senior seafarers.

Under this scheme, a one-time assistance of **₹50,000** is payable to seafarers holding an Indian CDC on completion of **65 years of age** on or after **01.01.2019**.

The eligibility condition relating to sea service has been rationalised from a minimum of six months sea service after the age of 55 to **six months sea service after attaining the age of 50 years**, through an Indian Shipping Company or RPSL.

Indian CDC must be cancelled, and applications are required to be submitted **within 12 months from attaining the age of 65 years.**

ii. Old Age Benefit Scheme – Age 75 Years

In addition to the above, a separate benefit has been introduced for seafarers attaining the age of **75 years on or after 01.01.2026.**

Under this provision:

- A one-time assistance of **₹1,00,000** is payable to eligible Indian seafarers holding Indian CDC.
- The benefit is applicable to seafarers who have performed a minimum of **six months sea service after attaining the age of 50 years** through an Indian Shipping Company or RPSL.



- Applications are required to be submitted **within 12 months from the date of attaining the age of 75 years.**

6.5.3.f. Death on Board Benefit Scheme (DBBS)

The **Death on Board Benefit Scheme (DBBS)**, effective from **12.03.2025**, provides ex-gratia assistance of **₹2,00,000** to the nominee registered for the vessel.

The scheme applies to **any type of death on board or presumed death on board** occurring on or after 12.03.2025, subject to the seafarer holding an Indian CDC and being in bona fide employment through an Indian Shipping Company or RPSL.

Applications under the scheme are required to be submitted **within three months of death or missing.**

6.5.3.g. Ex-Gratia Support Benefit Scheme (ESBS)

The **Ex-Gratia Support Benefit Scheme (ESBS)**, effective from **12.03.2025**, provides monthly financial support to the family of stranded or abandoned seafarers.

Under the existing provision, ex-gratia support of ₹10,000 per month was payable. This has been **amended to ₹20,000 per month** for families of seafarers who are abandoned or stranded on or after **01.01.2026**, payable for a maximum period of **12 months or until the date of abandonment**, whichever is earlier.

The scheme is applicable for stranded or abandoned seafarers on or after 12.03.2025. Assistance is paid after two months of being stranded, based on confirmation from local authorities. Applications must be submitted **within two months from the date of stranding or abandonment.**



6.5.3.h. Award to Meritorious Child of Seafarers (AMCS)

The **Award to Meritorious Child of Seafarers (AMCS)**, effective from **12.03.2025**, provides an incentive for academic excellence.

Under the scheme, a **cash award of ₹25,000** is paid to children of seafarers who top a full-time degree or postgraduate degree course (non-maritime) from an Indian University. Applications are required to be submitted **within two months of university confirmation**.

6.5.3.i. Rationale for Introduction of New Welfare Schemes

(i) Medical & Term Insurance Premium Assistance Scheme

This scheme provides reimbursement of **50% of insurance premium paid**, subject to limits of ₹3,000 towards Medical Insurance, ₹1,000 towards Critical Illness Cover, and ₹1,000 towards Term Insurance Cover, with a total maximum assistance of **₹5,000 per seafarer**.

Eligibility conditions relating to Indian CDC, sea service through Indian Shipping Company or RPSL, age-based service requirements, IRDA-approved insurance policies, and submission timelines have been specified to ensure targeted assistance.

(ii) Medical Support Scheme for Critical / Terminal Illness

This scheme provides **one-time financial medical assistance of ₹2 lakhs per case** to Indian seafarers diagnosed with critical or terminal illness as per IRDAI-approved list, subject to sea service criteria and mandatory certification from Government or recognised hospitals.

Applications are required to be submitted **within six months from the date of medical certificate**.



(iii) Indian Certificate of Competency (CoC) Recognition and Career Progression Scheme for Rating Seafarers

This scheme provides **one-time financial assistance up to ₹2 lakhs** to rating seafarers who successfully pass Indian CoC examinations conducted by the Directorate General of Shipping and become officers.

Assistance is granted only after successful completion and issuance of Indian CoC and is applicable only once, with the objective of promoting **skill upgradation, career advancement, and employability** of Indian seafarers.

6.6 Conclusion

The comprehensive rationalisation of SWFS schemes ensures continuity, adequacy, and clarity in welfare delivery, while preserving the original intent and structure of each scheme. The revisions and new introductions collectively strengthen the welfare framework for Indian seafarers and their families in alignment with evolving needs and service realities.

For the Directorate General of Shipping, this reform reaffirmed a core belief:

“That the strength of India’s maritime sector is inseparable from the wellbeing of those who serve at sea.”



7. KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SHIPPING



Keynote Address by Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Shipping.

During the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026, Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Shipping, delivered a comprehensive and forward-looking address, reaffirming the Government of India's unwavering commitment to the **welfare, dignity, safety, and professional advancement of Indian seafarers.**

At the outset, the Director General expressed condolences and solidarity in relation to the tragic national incident of late Shri Ajit Pawar Ji, reflecting the maritime administration's sensitivity and connection with the wider national community. He then welcomed the distinguished dignitaries present on the dais,



including representatives from international labour organisations, seafarer unions, and maritime institutions, underscoring the collective nature of the forum.

Recognition of MILAAP as a Collaborative Platform

The Director General placed strong emphasis on the significance of **MILAAP** as a collaborative platform conceived in partnership with the **International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)**. He acknowledged ITF's role in creating a space not only for seafarers, but also for their families, enabling interaction, confidence-building, and shared learning.

He noted that such platforms align closely with national policy frameworks, including:

- **Maritime India Vision 2030**, and
- **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**,

which envisage India's rise as a global maritime leader with human capital at its core.

India's Global Seafaring Aspirations and Ground Realities

In his address, Shri Shyam Jagannathan outlined India's ambitious vision in the global seafaring domain. He highlighted the national objective of increasing India's share in the global seafaring workforce from the current level to **approximately 25 per cent**, envisioning that **one out of every four seafarers globally would be Indian**.

At the same time, he candidly acknowledged existing challenges, including concerns related to **abandonment of seafarers** and compensation issues arising from unfortunate incidents at sea. This balanced articulation of aspiration and reality reinforced the credibility of the maritime administration's approach.



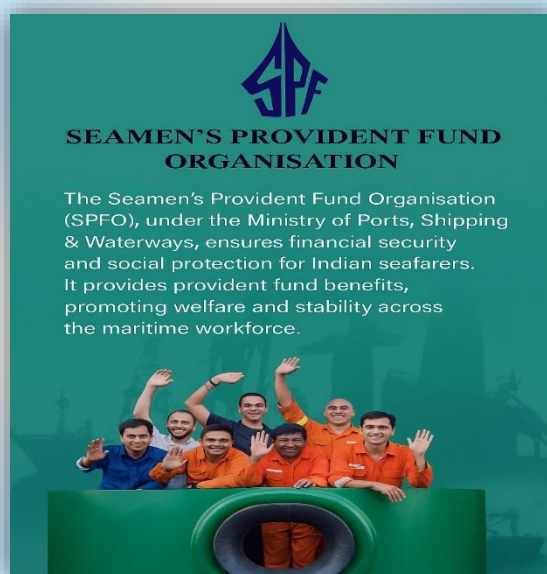
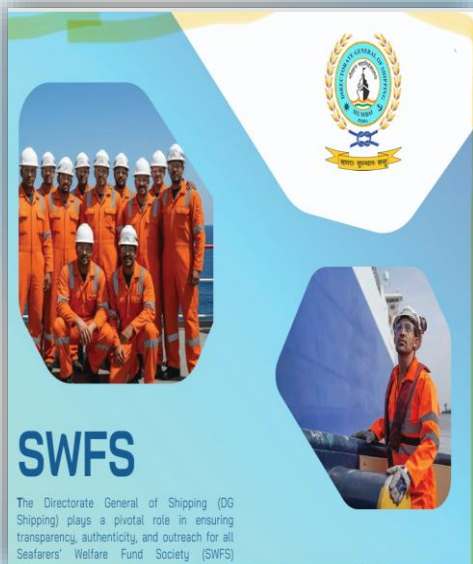
He assured the seafaring community that the **Maritime Administration stands firmly committed** to addressing these issues and safeguarding the dignity and rights of Indian seafarers at all stages of their careers.

Lifecycle Approach to Seafarer Welfare

The Director General emphasised that DG Shipping is addressing **all six stages of a seafarer's career**, adopting a lifecycle approach to welfare and professional support. In this context, he highlighted the role of:

- **Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS), and**
- **Seamen's Provident Fund Organisation (SPFO),**

in ensuring gratuity, financial security, and welfare benefits for seafarers and their families.

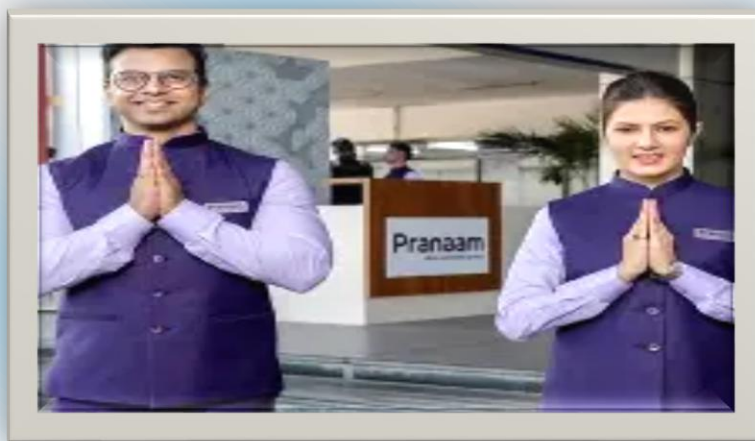


He appreciated the opportunity provided through the MILAAP Expo to showcase these welfare schemes directly to seafarers through a dedicated stall, enabling transparency and awareness.



Strengthening Welfare Infrastructure and Respect for Seafarers

A significant announcement during the address related to the **Seafarers' Board for Audit of Welfare Infrastructure**, aimed at ensuring quality shore-based facilities for seafarers at Indian ports. The objective, as articulated, is to provide safe and dignified spaces for rest and recuperation during shore leave.



The Director General also highlighted the establishment of the **“Pranam Counter” at Mumbai International Airport**, describing it as a symbolic and practical gesture of respect towards seafarers, facilitating **fault-free and dignified immigration processes**. He acknowledged the cooperation of immigration authorities and seafarer unions in operationalising this initiative.

Technology-Driven Reforms and Grievance Redressal

Shri Shyam Jagannathan announced a series of **technology-enabled governance reforms**, including:

- Introduction of a **24×7 grievance redressal mechanism** for seafarers, accessible through a toll-free number, WhatsApp, and email, proposed to be operational from **April 2026**.



- Comprehensive revamp of digital modules related to **Maritime Training Institutes (MTI)** and **Recruitment and Placement Services Licensing (RPSL)**.
- Commitment to **zero tolerance for corruption and illicit practices**, leveraging technology as an enabler of transparency.

He indicated that these revamped systems are targeted for full commissioning by **July 2026**.

Sagar Mein Yog and Gender Inclusivity



Calling for collective partnership, the Director General highlighted **Sagar Mein Yog** as a flagship initiative aimed at supporting the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of seafarers. He described the programme as fostering balance of **mind, body, and spirit**, essential for seafarers operating in demanding environments.

He emphasised that Sagar Mein Yog is being integrated as a **formal training component**, in partnership with seafarer unions and institutions, to help Indian seafarers serve as ambassadors of professionalism and excellence at sea.

The address also underscored the importance of **greater participation of women seafarers**, stressing that women must progress alongside their male counterparts in the maritime profession.

Legislative Reforms and Ease of Doing Business

The Director General outlined major legislative reforms undertaken by the Government of India, including:



- Replacement of the **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958** with the **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025**, with rules to be notified shortly.
- Notification and revision of the **Indian Ports Act**.
- Comprehensive updates to laws governing carriage of goods by sea and related maritime trade legislation.

These reforms, he noted, are guided by principles of **ease of doing business**, **decriminalisation for first-time offenders**, and technology-driven facilitation for all maritime stakeholders, including seafarers.

Way Forward and Closing Assurance

Drawing inspiration from MILAAP, the Director General announced that DG Shipping proposes to partner with seafarer unions and stakeholders to institutionalise an **annual maritime engagement platform**, further strengthening dialogue and collaboration.

In his concluding remarks, Shri Shyam Jagannathan assured seafarers that the **Maritime Administration stands with them round-the-clock**, urging them to remain confident, prioritise safety, and continue contributing to global maritime trade with pride and professionalism.

He concluded the address with a reaffirmation of solidarity with the seafaring community and a call for collective progress.



8. VOTE OF THANKS AND FORMAL CONCLUSION OF THE INAUGURAL SESSION

8.1 Context and Purpose of the Vote of Thanks

The **Vote of Thanks** marked the formal conclusion of the inaugural session of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026** on **29 January 2026**. Positioned at the close of a day rich in ceremonial significance, policy announcements, and high-level dialogue, the Vote of Thanks served as an opportunity to acknowledge the collective effort that brought the inaugural proceedings to fruition.

The address provided a reflective pause, recognising that the success of the inaugural session was the result of coordinated contributions from government authorities, international organisations, seafarer unions, and multiple stakeholders within the maritime ecosystem.

8.2 Delivery of the Vote of Thanks

The Vote of Thanks was delivered by **Milind Kandalgaonkar, General Secretary-cum-Treasurer, National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI)**.

In his address, Shri Kandalgaonkar expressed sincere gratitude to the **Chief Guest, Sameer Kumar Khare (IAS, Retd.)**, Chairperson, **National Shipping Board**, and the **Guest of Honour, Shyam Jagannathan, IAS**, Director General of Shipping, for their presence, leadership, and guidance during the inaugural proceedings.

8.3 Acknowledgement of Dignitaries and Stakeholders

The Vote of Thanks extended appreciation to senior national and international dignitaries and representatives, including:



- Leadership and representatives of the **International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)**
- Representatives of the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**
- Office bearers and members of Indian seafarer unions, including **NUSI, Maritime Union of India (MUI), and Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI)**
- Officers of the Directorate General of Shipping and allied maritime institutions
- Organisers, partners, volunteers, and participants

The address acknowledged the role played by each stakeholder group in shaping an inaugural session that was inclusive, purposeful, and impactful.

8.4 Recognition of Collective Effort and Shared Commitment

The Vote of Thanks highlighted the **collective nature of the Expo**, noting that meaningful progress in seafarer welfare can only be achieved through sustained cooperation between regulators, unions, international organisations, industry, and the seafaring community.

Shri Kandalgaonkar reaffirmed the shared commitment of all stakeholders towards:

- Protection of seafarers' rights
- Improvement of welfare and social security mechanisms
- Promotion of dignity, safety, and wellbeing at sea
- Continued dialogue and collaboration beyond the Expo



8.5 Closure of the Inaugural Session

The Vote of Thanks formally concluded the inaugural session of the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026. The session ended on a note of appreciation, unity, and forward-looking engagement, setting a positive tone for the technical sessions, welfare outreach activities, and stakeholder interactions scheduled for the subsequent days of the Expo.

The dignified closure reinforced the central message of the inaugural day: that **seafarer welfare is a shared responsibility**, and that sustained engagement remains essential for the betterment of the maritime community.

8.6 Transition to Subsequent Day-wise Engagements

With the conclusion of the inaugural session, the Expo transitioned into its next phase, comprising detailed technical sessions, scheme-wise engagement, wellness programmes, and beneficiary interactions across **Day-2 and Day-3**.

The strong foundation laid during the inaugural day ensured that subsequent engagements would be anchored in trust, clarity of purpose, and collective resolve.



9. PANEL DISCUSSION ON SEAFARER WELFARE, RIGHTS AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES

9.1 Context and Placement within Day-1

The panel discussion on Seafarer Welfare, Rights and Regulatory Challenges **was conducted as the final substantive session of Day-1 of the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026. Positioned deliberately at the close of the inaugural proceedings, the session was designed to translate the ceremonial, policy, and institutional commitments of the day into an open, participatory dialogue.**

The session served as a bridge between:

- **Policy announcements** made earlier in the day, and
- **Practical, ground-level realities** experienced by seafarers across different segments of the industry.

9.2 Composition of the Panel

The panel brought together senior officials and representatives from key pillars of the maritime ecosystem, including:

- The **Directorate General of Shipping**
- The **International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF)**
- The **International Labour Organization (ILO)**
- Indian maritime unions and sectoral experts
- Industry practitioners and welfare professionals



Shri P. C. Meena, representing the Directorate General of Shipping, participated in the panel and contributed the regulatory perspective of the maritime administration.

The diversity of the panel ensured that the discussion was **balanced, informed, and grounded in real-world experience**, while remaining aligned with international labour standards and national policy frameworks.

Key Themes and Issues Discussed

The panel discussion focused on a set of **interlinked and contemporary challenges** affecting seafarers globally and within the Indian maritime context. The major themes included:

9.2.1 Fair Treatment and Criminalisation of Seafarers

Panelists discussed instances where seafarers face criminalisation following maritime incidents, often without due consideration of systemic or operational factors. Emphasis was placed on the need for:

- Fair and proportionate treatment
- Due process and legal safeguards
- Alignment with international guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers

The discussion underscored the importance of distinguishing between **operational accidents and criminal negligence**, and the role of administrations in safeguarding seafarers' rights during investigations.

9.2.2 Ethical Recruitment Practices

Ethical recruitment emerged as a critical area of concern. Panelists highlighted:

- Risks posed by unregulated intermediaries



- Financial exploitation and misinformation
- Importance of transparent recruitment and placement practices

The role of regulatory oversight, licensing of Recruitment and Placement Services (RPSLs), and awareness among seafarers was emphasised as essential to eliminating unethical practices.

9.2.3 Abandonment of Seafarers

Abandonment of seafarers was discussed as a pressing humanitarian and regulatory issue. Panelists examined:

- Causes of abandonment, including insolvency and flag-state enforcement gaps
- Immediate humanitarian impact on seafarers and families
- Coordination required between flag States, port States, unions, and international bodies

The discussion reinforced the need for **swift response mechanisms**, financial safeguards, and institutional accountability to address abandonment cases effectively.

9.2.4 Implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006

The panel reviewed challenges and progress in the implementation of the **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006)**. Key points included:

- Ensuring uniform application of MLC provisions
- Strengthening inspection and compliance mechanisms
- Addressing gaps between regulatory intent and on-board realities

Panelists noted that effective MLC implementation remains foundational to ensuring decent working and living conditions for seafarers.



9.2.5 Health, Safety and Mental Wellbeing at Sea

Mental health and wellbeing were recognised as increasingly important dimensions of seafarer welfare. Panelists discussed:

- Isolation and fatigue associated with long voyages
- Impact of stress on safety and performance
- Need for institutional support mechanisms, counselling, and awareness

Initiatives such as **Sagar Mein Yog** were referenced as positive steps towards integrating wellness into maritime welfare frameworks.

9.3 Regulatory Perspective from the Directorate General of Shipping

Representing the Directorate General of Shipping, **Capt P. C. Meena** articulated the administration's approach towards:

- Strengthening regulatory oversight while remaining sensitive to seafarers' lived realities
- Aligning national practices with international conventions and best practices
- Enhancing grievance redressal and welfare delivery mechanisms

He emphasised that effective regulation must be **people-centric**, combining enforcement with empathy, and reiterated the administration's commitment to continuous stakeholder engagement.



9.4 Interactive Dialogue and Audience Engagement

The session encouraged interaction between panellists and the audience, which included seafarers, union representatives, cadets, and welfare professionals. Questions and observations from participants reflected:

- Practical challenges faced on board vessels
- Concerns relating to grievance resolution timelines
- Expectations from regulatory authorities and unions

The open dialogue reinforced trust and demonstrated the value of such platforms in surfacing ground-level insights that inform policy and practice.

9.5 Institutional Significance of the Panel Discussion

The panel discussion marked an important shift from **announcement to accountability**. By openly discussing challenges and constraints, the session:

- Reinforced transparency in maritime governance
- Encouraged collaborative problem-solving
- Validated the experiences and voices of seafarers

The presence of regulators, unions, and international organisations on a single platform highlighted a shared commitment to protecting the **dignity, rights, and wellbeing of seafarers**.

9.6 Closure of Day-1 Proceedings

The panel discussion effectively concluded the engagements of **Day-1** of the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026. The session tied together the ceremonial opening, policy announcements, and welfare reforms introduced earlier in the day, grounding them in lived experience and dialogue.



Day-1 thus closed with:

- Clear articulation of challenges
- Affirmation of institutional commitment
- Momentum for deeper technical and welfare-focused sessions on subsequent days

10. CONCLUSION OF DAY-1 AND TRANSITION TO DAY-2

10.1 Overview of Day-1 Outcomes

The first day of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026**, held on **29 January 2026**, concluded with a clear sense of direction, purpose, and institutional resolve. Day-1 successfully combined **ceremonial dignity, policy substance, and participatory dialogue**, setting a strong foundation for the technical, welfare-focused, and beneficiary-centric engagements planned for the subsequent days.

From the ceremonial welcome and inauguration to the announcement of welfare reforms and the concluding panel discussion, the proceedings reflected a **coherent narrative**: that seafarer welfare is not a peripheral concern, but a **core responsibility of maritime governance**.

10.2 Consolidation of Key Institutional Messages

Several key messages emerged distinctly over the course of Day-1:

- The **Directorate General of Shipping** reaffirmed its role not only as a regulator, but as a **custodian of seafarer welfare**, committed to accessibility, transparency, and responsiveness.
- The unveiling of the **Seafarers’ Welfare Fund Society (SWFS) logo** and the announcement of scheme rationalisation and new welfare schemes



underscored a **renewed institutional focus on adequacy, clarity, and lifecycle-based support** for seafarers and their families

- International organisations, unions, and national stakeholders collectively reiterated the importance of **collaboration, ethical practices, and alignment with international labour standards**, particularly the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

These messages were consistently reinforced across formal addresses, interactions at the DGS stall, and the panel discussion.

10.3 Integration of Policy and Dialogue

A defining strength of Day-1 was the seamless integration of **policy announcements with open dialogue**. Welfare scheme reforms and new initiatives announced during the day were not presented in isolation; instead, they were contextualised through discussion on real-world challenges such as abandonment, fair treatment, ethical recruitment, and mental wellbeing.

This approach ensured that:

- Policy intent was clearly communicated, and
- Stakeholder feedback and lived experiences were acknowledged as essential inputs into governance.

The panel discussion that concluded Day-1 served as an effective platform for this integration, enabling regulators, unions, international bodies, and seafarers to engage constructively.



10.4 Stakeholder Confidence and Engagement

The presence and active participation of senior leadership, including the **Chief Guest** and **Guest of Honour**, along with international and national representatives, contributed significantly to building stakeholder confidence.

Seafarers and their families who interacted with the DGS pavilion and attended sessions expressed appreciation for:

- Direct access to officers and institutions
- Clear explanation of welfare schemes and eligibility conditions
- The visible commitment of the administration to listen and respond

Day-1 thus played a critical role in strengthening trust between seafarers and institutions.





10.5 Concluding Note on Day-1

Day-1 of the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026 concluded with a shared understanding that the wellbeing, dignity, and rights of seafarers require continuous attention, coordinated action, and sustained dialogue. The proceedings reaffirmed that meaningful maritime governance is built not only on regulation, but on care, empathy, and partnership.

The momentum generated on Day-1 set the stage for deeper engagement and tangible outcomes during the remaining days of the Expo.



Day-2:

11. Widespread Media Spotlight and Global Attention on MILAAP ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026



11.1 Media Coverage

Coverage of the Expo and DG Shipping's role appeared in both Indian and international press, though it was concentrated in specialized maritime and labour media. Key public sources include:

- ITF Press Release (30 Jan 2026):** The ITF's official news item on the Expo opening (co-titled "Seafarers, unions and maritime industry leaders unite at MILAAP ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026") extensively quoted DG Shipping. It reported that DG Jagannathan "announced a raft of new initiatives to support" Indian seafarers. This release emphasized the Government's commitment to seafarer welfare ("the maritime



administration is committed to your welfare, your dignity and your safety 24/7”) and listed announced measures: a new 24/7 toll-free grievance hotline (via phone, WhatsApp and email) launching April 2026, seafarers’ clubs at every Indian port, and expanded insurance coverage (medical, critical illness, life) for eligible seafarers. The ITF press piece also confirmed DG Jagannathan and ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton as opening speakers.

- **Maritime Press (Seafarers.org):** A report by the Seafarers International Union (affiliated to ITF) previewing the Expo noted that the DG Shipping would “be in attendance, with India’s Director General of Shipping, Shri Shyam Jagannathan, due to speak at the opening of the Expo”. It described the scale of the event: *“Thousands of Indian seafarers are set to attend the ITF’s Seafarers’ Expo, a unique three-day event”* with broad participation from unions, welfare organizations, shipowners and regulators. This article also highlighted India’s recent policy actions (e.g. blacklisting 86 vessels for seafarer abuses) as context for the Expo and Indian commitment.
- **Industry News (India Seatrade News):** Although focused mainly on DG Shipping’s airport initiatives, this outlet’s Jan 2026 report on PRANAAM provides context. It detailed the PRANAAM counter launch and noted DG Shipping’s “continued focus on seafarer welfare and ease of movement”. The timing (mid-Jan) meant PRANAAM was a fresh initiative during the Expo week.
- **Union and Social Media:** Posts by maritime unions and DG Shipping itself appeared on social platforms. For example, DG Shipping’s official LinkedIn page (and similarly on Twitter/X and Facebook) posted on 30 January 2026 that *“SWFS, SPFO, and Pranaam were presented in the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026”*, describing the Expo as a platform for welfare and rights awareness. This aligns with the media messaging.



(Union accounts such as NUSI and ITF-affiliates also shared photos and summaries of the event, though most lacked formal prose to cite.)

Together, the press coverage confirms that the Expo was framed as a landmark welfare event, and that the DG Shipping team took the opportunity to publicize new measures. The ITF release in particular serves as a quasi-official transcript of DG Jagannathan's remarks and captures the main announcements. No major national newspapers (e.g. mainstream English dailies) appear to have run stories on the Expo, so coverage was largely limited to trade and labour outlets.

11.2 Social Media Insights

Social media channels provided real-time snapshots of DG Shipping's activities. DG Shipping's own accounts (Twitter/X, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) were active during the Expo, sharing photographs and bulletins of the event. Key highlights from these posts include:

- **Programme Highlights:** An official LinkedIn post on 30 Jan 2026 stated that DG Shipping had "*presented SWFS, SPFO, and Pranaam*" at the Expo and framed the event as promoting welfare and seafarer rights. This confirms that those three initiatives were central to DG's on-site messaging. The same post emphasized "*collaborative efforts towards improving working and living conditions in the maritime sector*".
- **Leadership Speeches:** Short video clips and quotes from Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, DGS's speech (e.g. "committed to your welfare...24/7") circulated on Twitter and Facebook. (These quotes coincide with the ITF press release.) Similarly, Additional DG Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde was shown addressing seafarers in some social clips, underscoring the Ministry's visibility.



- **Engagement Content:** Social posts from DG Shipping and from participating unions showed stall interactions: officers explaining schemes to cadets, distributing brochures, and answering queries. For instance, union feed posts from January 30 (by NUSI/MUI) mention DG Shipping conducting “focused sessions” (e.g. on PRANAAM and on legal protection for seafarers through initiatives like *Sagar Mein Samman*). (While these were brief captions, they underscore active engagement.)
- **Hashtags and Reach:** Posts routinely used tags like #ITFSeafarersExpo2026, #MILAAP2026, #SeafarerWelfare, #MaritimeIndia and #SeafarersRights. Combined, DG Shipping’s social media updates and union/ITF posts reached a network of thousands of followers, amplifying the Expo’s themes.

In summary, DG Shipping’s social media presence during MILAAP 2026 reinforced the same messages as the official press: the focus on welfare schemes (SWFS, SPFO, PRANAAM) and personal commitments to seafarers’ well-being. Captured images and videos also showed high engagement at the stall (see *Visitor Engagement* below). These posts serve as a de facto visual record of DG Shipping’s Expo outreach.



11.3 Visitor Engagement

Onsite visitor engagement at the DG Shipping stall appeared strong. Though no official footfall figures were published, thousands of seafarers attended the Expo overall, and the DG pavilion reported a continuous stream of guests. Anecdotal evidence (and lessons from similar events) suggest broad interest across stakeholder groups:

- **Seafarers and Cadets:** Active merchant seafarers and maritime students were primary visitors. Many asked detailed questions about welfare benefits and social-security schemes. For example, at DG-sponsored events like India Maritime Week 2025, *cadets and students were “particularly enthusiastic”* in learning about welfare schemes; similar enthusiasm was noted at the Expo. Female seafarers showed special interest in maternity and family support schemes (SWFS Maternity Benefit, meritorious children awards).
- **Families and Dependents:** The Expo was family-friendly, and seafarers’ families (spouses, children) also came by the DG stall. They inquired about benefits like the Survivor Benefit Scheme (for widows and orphans) and educational support for seafarers’ children. Brochures on schemes for dependents were a popular takeaway.
- **Maritime Unions and NGOs:** Delegations from unions and welfare groups (NUSI, MUI, FSUI, and even international affiliates) visited the





DG stall to discuss policy issues. As at IMW 2025, a NUSI team and MUI general secretary were on hand to liaise. Unions commended DG Shipping's transparent approach and suggested ongoing outreach.

- **Training Institutes:** Faculty and students from major maritime colleges (e.g. BP Marine Academy, T.S. Rehman Institute, SCILAL) stopped by. These visitors engaged with DG officers about integrating wellness (Sagar Mein Yog) and career guidance (Provident Fund) into their curricula. The two-way interactions often involved distributing materials and collecting feedback from youth.
- **Industry Representatives:** Captains, shipping company HR managers, and port authorities also participated. Notables at the Expo included Capt. Savio, Capt. Amit Deshpande, Capt. Habla and others (as listed in similar events). They discussed implementation of welfare policies on vessels and at ports, and some offered testimonials on how schemes had helped their crews.

These engagements indicate that DG Shipping's initiatives resonated with the maritime community. Staff at the stall addressed queries on-the-spot and encouraged many to register for benefits online. In past events (e.g. IMW 2025), on-the-spot testimonials by beneficiaries spurred new registrations; the Expo seemed to have a similar dynamic. Overall, the DG stall had among the highest footfall of all exhibit sections, reflecting strong stakeholder interest.

11.4 DGS Stall Activities and Welfare Outreach

Throughout the **MILAAP ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026**, the stall of the **Directorate General of Shipping** became a warm, welcoming space where seafarers and their families felt heard, guided, and supported. Officers at the stall patiently explained welfare schemes and answered questions in simple language,



helping visitors understand benefits related to **SWFS**, **SPFO**, and national initiatives such as **Sagar Mein Samman** and **Sagar Mein Yog**.

Many seafarers shared personal concerns,

while families sought clarity on future security, and each interaction reflected care rather than formality. Over the three days, the Directorate distributed around **1,200 thoughtfully prepared goodie kits** to seafarers and their families. These were not symbolic gifts, but useful companions: a **digital thermos water bottle** for daily use, a **pen**, and a **pen-drive** carrying important information that seafarers could keep with them on board. The pen-drive was loaded with clear details on **SWFS schemes**, **SPFO**, welfare initiatives, the **Code of Conduct**, **Do's and Don'ts**, the **Crew Manual**, the **Crew Annual Report**, and other safety and awareness material so that even far out at sea, reliable information would remain close at hand.

The smiles, words of thanks, and quiet conversations at the stall showed that these small gestures mattered. Through this outreach, the Directorate General of Shipping reaffirmed a simple promise: that seafarers are not alone, and that their welfare, dignity, and wellbeing truly matter on land, at sea, and beyond the Expo.



12. Directorate General of Shipping Sessions at ITF Day-2

12.1 SWFS, SPFO and PRANAAM Awareness Session



The **SWFS, SPFO and PRANAAM Awareness Session**, held on **30 January 2026** during the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026**, was presented by **Capt. Nitin Mukesh, Deputy Nautical Adviser-cum-Senior Deputy Director General (Technical/Crew)**. The session was conducted with the clear intent of making seafarers fully aware of their **rights, entitlements, and welfare support systems**, while also building confidence in the institutions working for their wellbeing.

At the outset, **Captain Nitin Mukesh** shared a personal reflection, stating that he himself had sailed as a **seafarer and Master Mariner for over 16 years**. He emphasised that his engagement with seafarers was not merely administrative, but personal, as he considers himself **one among them**. This acknowledgement



immediately resonated with the audience and set a tone of empathy and credibility for the session.

During the session, **Captain Nitin Mukesh** spoke at length about the **Seamen's Provident Fund Organisation (SPFO)**, explaining its importance as a lifelong financial safety net for seafarers. He patiently guided participants through how provident fund contributions are made, how withdrawals can be availed during times of need, and how final settlements support seafarers and their families after retirement or cessation of service. Emphasis was placed on transparency, direct benefit transfer, and the importance of keeping personal records updated so that seafarers are never deprived of their rightful savings.

He then explained the role and functioning of the **Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS)** in simple, relatable terms, ensuring that seafarers understood that these welfare schemes exist specifically for them and their families. Existing welfare schemes such as the **Survivor's Benefit Scheme, Invalidity Benefit Scheme, Maternity Benefit Scheme, Family Benefit Welfare Scheme, Old Age Benefit Schemes, Death on Board Benefit Scheme, Ex-Gratia Support for Abandoned Seafarers, and Awards to Meritorious Children of Seafarers** were explained clearly, along with recent enhancements in benefit amounts and eligibility criteria. He reassured the audience that these schemes have been strengthened to provide timely and meaningful support during moments of loss, illness, old age, education needs, and abandonment.

A key highlight of the session was the **introduction of new welfare schemes**, which Captain Nitin Mukesh presented as a reflection of the evolving needs of the seafaring community. These included assistance for **medical and term insurance premiums, medical support for critical or terminal illness**, and a **career progression scheme for rating seafarers** aspiring to become officers by obtaining Indian Certificates of Competency. He explained that these initiatives



were designed to support seafarers not only during hardship, but also in their aspirations for growth, security, and dignity at every stage of their professional life.

The session also highlighted the significance of **PRANAAM – Seafarers' Assistance Services**, a dedicated airport facilitation initiative created to ease the travel experience of seafarers. Capt. Nitin Mukesh explained how PRANAAM counters provide timely, respectful, and structured assistance to seafarers during departures and arrivals, especially during tight joining schedules. He underlined

SWFS, SPFO & Pranaam Participate in MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026

to Promote Seafarer Welfare

that PRANAAM is being implemented in collaboration with trusted partners, including support from the **UK Government**, reflecting international cooperation aimed at ensuring smoother and more dignified transit for Indian seafarers.

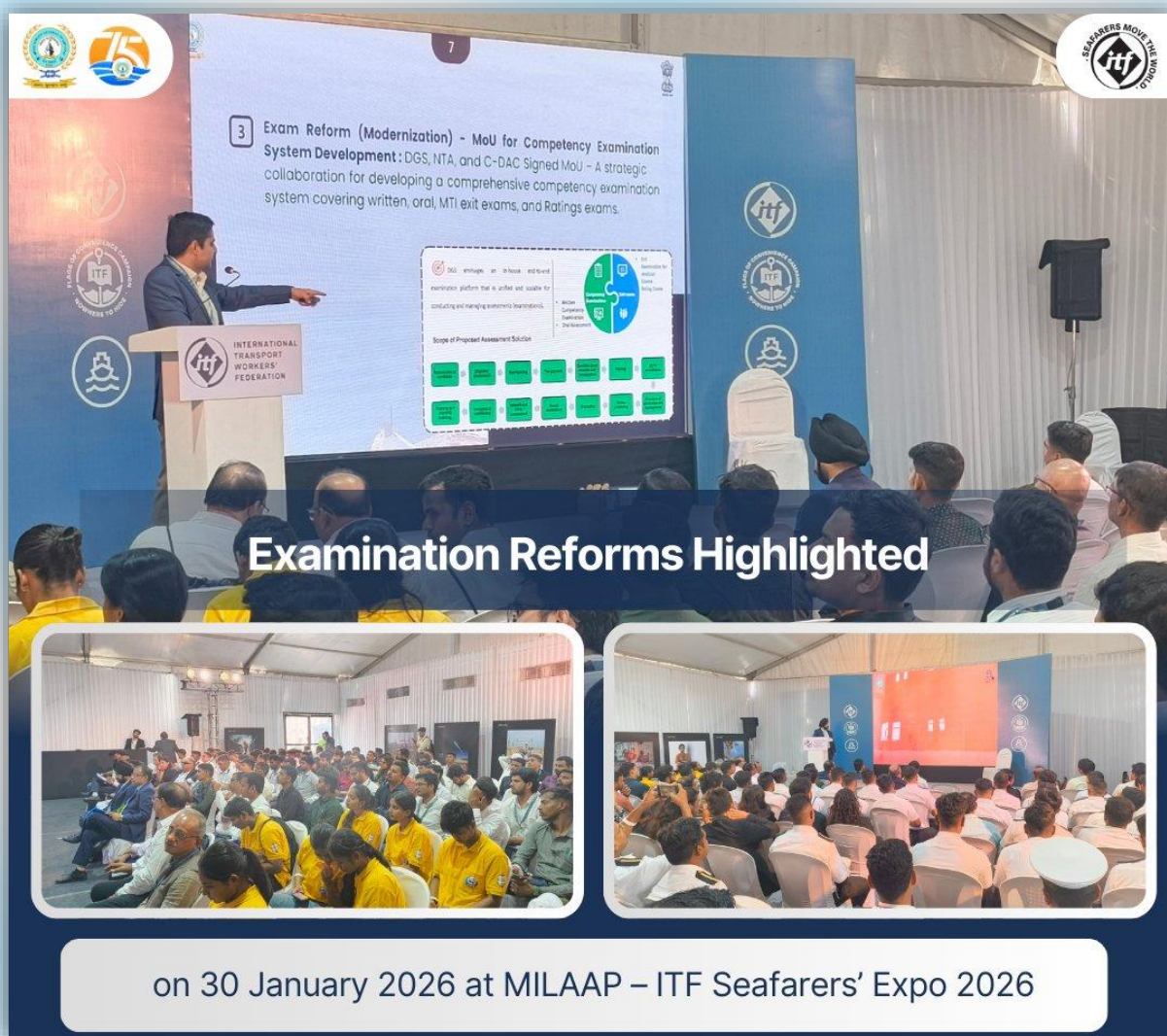


In a moment that reflected appreciation and inclusiveness, **Captain Nitin Mukesh also felicitated two staff members** for their contribution to the creation of the **new SPFO logo**. The **first prize of ₹10,000** and **second prize of ₹5,000** were awarded, acknowledging creativity and dedication within the organisation. This gesture reinforced the message that welfare systems are built not only on policies, but also on the commitment and innovation of people behind the scenes.

Overall, the session stood out for its clarity, sincerity, and human connection. Seafarers left the session better informed, reassured about their financial security and welfare support, and confident that the Directorate General of Shipping continues to work with empathy, responsibility, and long-term commitment towards their wellbeing and dignity.



12.2 Modernisation of Competency Examinations in India



The session on **Modernisation of Competency Examinations in India** was presented on **30 January 2026** during the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026** by **Capt Ravi Singh Sikarwar, Nautical Surveyor-cum-Deputy Director General (Technical), Directorate General of Shipping**. The session was delivered with a clear focus on fairness, transparency, and the long-term professional growth of Indian seafarers, reinforcing the message that examination systems must evolve in step with global maritime standards and the realities faced by candidates.



Capt. Ravi Singh Sikarwar began by emphasising that seafarers are the backbone of the global economy, carrying more than ninety percent of world trade, and that India, as one of the world's leading suppliers of maritime professionals, bears a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of training and certification. He highlighted India's maritime strength, noting the growing number of active seafarers and the country's aspiration to further expand its global share, supported by a credible, modern, and internationally trusted examination system.

The presentation provided insight into recent certification trends, sharing that a significant increase in **Certificates of Competency (CoCs)** had been recorded, reflecting both rising demand and improved examination throughput. Captain Sikarwar explained that such growth must be supported by examination processes that are objective, secure, and consistent across examination centres, ensuring equal opportunity for all candidates regardless of region.

A major reform highlighted during the session was the **abolition of the star system** from nautical competency examinations, a step taken to remove ambiguity and perceived subjectivity from assessment outcomes. This reform, implemented through official circulars, was explained as a move towards clearer, outcome-based evaluation that rewards competence rather than interpretative grading. He also spoke about the **revised NCV Deck Cadet Scheme for GP Ratings**, which creates a structured pathway for ratings to progress to navigational watchkeeping officers, thereby strengthening career mobility within India's coastal shipping sector.

Capt Ravi Singh Sikarwar further outlined the **modernisation of examination infrastructure**, including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Directorate General of Shipping, the National Testing Agency, and C-DAC for the development of a comprehensive, technology-driven examination



system. This initiative covers written, oral, and exit examinations, and has already entered a pilot phase with digital question papers, secure scanning, and improved evaluation systems aimed at enhancing efficiency and integrity. He also shared updates on syllabus revision committees, consolidation of safe manning provisions, expansion of examination centres to reduce travel burden for candidates, and the future integration of digital navigation tools such as ECDIS into the examination framework.

The session concluded with an emphasis on continuous engagement with candidates and examiners to standardise assessment practices and incorporate feedback. Overall, the presentation reassured seafarers that examination reforms are being undertaken not as procedural changes alone, but as part of a broader commitment to **fair assessment, skill recognition, and global credibility** of Indian maritime certification. The session was well received and strengthened confidence among seafarers that their professional development is being supported through a transparent, modern, and forward-looking examination system.



12.3 Marine Casualty: Response, Reporting and Safety



Learnings

A detailed and impactful session on **Marine Casualty: Response, Reporting and Safety Learnings** was delivered on **30 January 2026** at the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026** by **Captain Harinder Singh, Nautical Surveyor-cum-Deputy Director General (Tech), Directorate General of Shipping**. The session was aimed at strengthening safety awareness among seafarers by drawing lessons from real maritime incidents and reinforcing the importance of preparedness, compliance, and timely reporting.

Capt Harinder Singh began the session by explaining the **role of the Directorate General of Shipping in handling marine casualties**, highlighting that the **Casualty Branch** functions as the nodal point for all incidents involving Indian-



flag vessels anywhere in the world, foreign-flag vessels in Indian waters, and cases involving Indian nationals on foreign vessels. He explained that casualty management is not limited to investigation alone, but spans the entire lifecycle of an incident, including emergency response, coordination, monitoring, reporting, and preventive safety action.

The session provided insights into how the Directorate coordinates with multiple national and international agencies, including the **Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy, port authorities, coastal state administrations**, insurers, salvors, and the **International Maritime Organization**, ensuring that response actions are swift, structured, and proportionate to the severity and jurisdiction of the casualty. Captain Singh emphasised that saving lives, preventing environmental damage, and ensuring seafarer safety remain the foremost priorities during any maritime incident.

A significant portion of the session focused on the **Directorate General Communication Centre**, which operates as a **24×7 single-point contact** for reporting marine casualties and emergencies. Captain Singh explained how distress calls, Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) alerts, and safety messages are received, processed, and acted upon in real time, enabling seamless coordination between vessels and response agencies. He also highlighted the role of the **Mercantile Marine Domain Awareness Centre (MMDAC)** and the **Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) system**, which extend India's maritime situational awareness beyond the coastline and support search and rescue, security, and compliance monitoring.

The session further stressed the importance of **mandatory and timely casualty reporting** through the **Online Casualty Reporting Portal**, which requires incidents to be reported within 24 hours. Capt Harinder Singh explained that the data collected through this portal is not merely procedural, but forms the basis for



structured analysis, identification of recurring trends, and development of targeted safety interventions. He shared comparative data indicating an increase in reported incidents in recent years, underscoring the need for heightened safety awareness and continuous learning from past events.

An important highlight of the session was the discussion on **safety learnings and prevention of future occurrences**. Captain Singh explained how findings from casualty investigations are converted into actionable guidance, including safety advisories, circulars, and training inputs. He also highlighted the **Casualty Safety Video Series**, launched through **DGS Circular No. 60 of 2025**, which uses real incident case studies to sensitise seafarers to operational risks, promote adherence to safety procedures, and foster a strong safety culture on board ships.

The session concluded with a clear message that **most maritime casualties are preventable** when safety procedures are followed diligently, risks are identified





early, and incidents are reported without delay. The interactive discussion reinforced that safety at sea is a shared responsibility between regulators, ship owners, masters, officers, and crew. The session was well received by seafarers, who appreciated the practical, experience-based approach and the emphasis on learning rather than blame, reaffirming the Directorate General of Shipping's commitment to safeguarding lives and strengthening maritime safety standards

12.4 Abandonment Scenarios and 24×7 Grievance Redressal: Awareness on Fraud and Cheating

A comprehensive awareness session on **Abandonment Scenarios and 24×7 Grievance Redressal**, with a special focus on **fraud and cheating in recruitment**, was delivered on **30 January 2026** at the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026** by **Capt P. C. Meena, Nautical Surveyor and Deputy Director General (Crew), Directorate General of Shipping**. The session addressed one of the most serious challenges faced by seafarers globally which is abandonment and outlined India's structured, compassionate, and firm approach to protecting seafarers' rights and welfare.

Capt P. C. Meena began by explaining the concept of seafarer abandonment as defined under the **Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006**, highlighting that abandonment occurs when ship owners fail to repatriate seafarers, pay wages for two months or more, or provide essential support and care. He placed the issue in an international context, referring to the **ILO–IMO Joint Database on Abandonment**, which tracks cases globally and enables coordinated responses by flag states, port states, unions, and administrations. He explained how abandonment cases are categorised as resolved, unresolved, disputed, or inactive, allowing authorities to prioritise intervention and monitor outcomes.



The session provided valuable insights into the **root causes of abandonment**, including inexperienced ship owners, weak financial management, delayed reporting by seafarers, invalid or expired P&I insurance, fraudulent Recruitment and Placement Service Licence (RPSL) agencies, and poor oversight by certain flag states. Using data and examples, Captain P.C. Meena stressed that delayed reporting significantly reduces the ability of authorities to intervene early, underscoring the importance of timely communication with the Directorate General of Shipping.

Capt P.C. Meena then detailed the **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** followed by the Directorate General of Shipping in handling abandonment cases. This included case listing, identification of Indian crew through e-governance systems, stakeholder notification involving flag states, P&I insurers, Indian Missions, ship owners, and RPSLs, followed by government intervention, legal escalation where required, and eventual repatriation and debriefing. He highlighted that the Directorate works closely with the **Ministry of External Affairs**, Indian Missions abroad, and international partners to ensure seafarers are brought home safely and their dues pursued.

A significant portion of the session focused on **course corrective measures** taken by the Directorate General of Shipping to prevent recurrence of abandonment. These included strict regulatory action against defaulting RPSLs, withdrawal of approvals of fraudulent agencies, enhanced inspections and audits, strengthening of bank guarantee requirements, and proposals for blacklisting repeat offenders. He also highlighted recent amendments and circulars issued to strengthen recruitment oversight, improve data accuracy, and enhance transparency.

Capt P.C Meena strongly cautioned seafarers against **fraudulent recruitment practices**, advising them never to pay placement fees, to verify RPSL validity through the official DGS portal, to authenticate Form-I documents, and to update



vessel details in their Seafarer Master Profile after joining. He highlighted the availability of **live public access to RPSL status**, integrated with the e-Migrate system, empowering seafarers to make informed and safe employment decisions.

The session also highlighted the **24×7 Grievance Redressal Mechanism** of the Directorate General of Shipping, which provides a single digital platform for lodging, tracking, and resolving grievances. Contact details of the **24×7 DG Communication Support Centre** were shared, reinforcing that help is always available. Additionally, the **SWFS Ex-Gratia Support Benefit Scheme** for abandoned seafarers was explained, providing temporary financial relief to families during periods of abandonment.

The session concluded with a strong message that abandonment is unacceptable and preventable through awareness, early reporting, and strict enforcement. The interaction reassured seafarers that the Government of India remains committed to standing with them in times of distress and that abandonment cases are handled with urgency, coordination, and empathy, ensuring dignity, justice, and protection for every Indian seafare



12.5 Sagar Mein Samman – Empowering Women at Sea through Safety, Dignity and Equality



A dedicated session on **Sagar Mein Samman** was conducted on **30 January 2026** at **Tent 2** during the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026**, and was presented by **Dr. Kusum Kanwar**, representing the **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)**. The session focused on the Government of India's flagship initiative aimed at creating a safer, more dignified, and inclusive maritime environment for women seafarers.

Dr. Kusum Kanwar is an established K–12 educationist, social entrepreneur, and advocate for child, youth, and women development programmes, with extensive experience in designing initiatives rooted in **social inclusion and empowerment**. Drawing from her background in education and community engagement, she brought a deeply human and empathetic perspective to the session, bridging policy intent with lived social realities.



During the session, **Sagar Mein Samman** was presented not merely as a policy framework, but as a long-term cultural and institutional commitment to dignity, safety, and equality at sea. Dr. Kanwar explained that the initiative was launched by the Directorate General of Shipping to challenge structural barriers faced by women in maritime professions and to move decisively away from the perception of shipping as a male-dominated sector.

She highlighted that the initiative aligns with **Maritime India Vision 2030**, particularly Deliverable 10.15, and contributes to India's commitments under **Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality)** and **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Inclusive Growth)**. Acknowledging the current underrepresentation of women in seafaring roles, she outlined the vision of increasing women's participation across technical, operational, and leadership positions within the maritime workforce.

The session detailed the **core pillars of Sagar Mein Samman**, including onboard safety, workplace dignity, equal opportunity in recruitment and career progression, gender sensitisation, and strengthened grievance redressal mechanisms. Dr. Kanwar emphasised the importance of addressing issues such as harassment, discrimination, lack of safe accommodation, and limited mentoring opportunities through systemic change rather than isolated interventions.

She also traced the evolution of the initiative through policy milestones, stakeholder consultations, and institutional collaborations with maritime training institutions, unions, and social organisations. The phased approach of awareness-building, capacity development, and monitoring was highlighted as essential to ensuring lasting impact.



The session concluded with the message that Sagar Mein Samman represents a shift in mindset as much as in regulation. By embedding respect, safety, and inclusion into everyday maritime practice, the initiative seeks to ensure that women seafarers are not only welcomed into the profession but are supported to thrive, grow, and lead with confidence and dignity.

12.6 Mind–Body Wellness with Yog (Sagar Mein Yog)



The session on **Mind–Body Wellness with Yog**, held on **30 January 2026** during the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026**, was conducted by **Shri Rudresh Kumar Singh**, Head – Corporate & Government Yoga Programs, **The Art of Living International Center, Bengaluru**. Delivered under the **Sagar Mein Yog** initiative, the session gently introduced seafarers to a **holistic approach to wellbeing**, recognising the physical strain, mental stress, emotional fatigue, and isolation often associated with life at sea. Drawing from yogic principles, Shri Rudresh Singh explained how simple practices encompassing **asana, pranayama, breath awareness, mindful nutrition, rest, and meditation** can help restore balance to the body and mind, even within the confined and demanding environment of a ship. He emphasised that wellness is



not an occasional activity but a daily discipline that strengthens resilience, improves focus, and supports emotional stability during long voyages. The interactive and calming session resonated well with participants, reinforcing that caring for one's inner health is as essential as technical competence for safety and performance at sea, and that **Sagar Mein Yog** offers seafarers practical tools to nurture wellbeing wherever their journey takes them.

12.7 Conclusion of Day-2 Proceedings (30 January 2026)



Day-2 of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026** concluded as a day of **deep engagement, learning, and empowerment**, firmly centred on the everyday realities faced by seafarers and their families. While Day-1 had laid the ceremonial and policy foundation, Day-2 translated those commitments into



practical knowledge, awareness, and direct interaction through a full spectrum of technical, welfare, and wellbeing-oriented sessions.

Throughout the day, seafarers actively participated in sessions covering **safe and ethical recruitment, abandonment and grievance redressal, examination reforms, maritime safety, gender dignity, mental health, and holistic wellbeing**. Each session reinforced a common message that seafarer welfare is multidimensional and must address professional competence, financial security, personal safety, dignity, and mental resilience in equal measure.

The continuous engagement at the **Directorate General of Shipping stall**, combined with targeted awareness sessions, ensured that information was not only delivered but understood and carried forward. The distribution of welfare and awareness material further strengthened this outreach, enabling seafarers to retain access to reliable guidance beyond the Expo.



The day concluded with a sense of **confidence and reassurance among participants**, reflecting trust in institutions, clarity on rights and responsibilities,



and renewed awareness of the support systems available to them. The Union celebration that followed marked the close of the day on a note of solidarity and collective spirit.

Overall, Day-2 stood out as a **people-centric and knowledge-driven chapter of the Expo**, reinforcing the shared commitment of the Government of India, international organisations, unions, and stakeholders to place **seafarers' welfare, dignity, and wellbeing at the heart of the maritime ecosystem**, while setting the stage for the concluding engagements of Day-3.





DAY-3

13 DAY-3 PROCEEDINGS – FINAL DAY OF MILAAP – ITF SEAFARERS’ EXPO 2026

13.1 DGS Stall Engagements on Day-3

The **third and final day** of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026** witnessed **sustained and meaningful engagement** at the stall of the **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)**, reflecting the trust, awareness, and goodwill built over the previous two days. Day-3 emerged as a culmination of outreach efforts, with a steady stream of seafarers, family members, cadets, and maritime stakeholders visiting the stall to seek clarifications, share experiences, and access welfare-related guidance.

The DGS stall continued to function as a **single-window facilitation point**, addressing queries related to **SWFS welfare schemes, SPFO benefits, recruitment safeguards, grievance redressal mechanisms**, and national initiatives such as **Sagar Mein Samman** and **Sagar Mein Yog**. Many visitors who had attended sessions on earlier days returned for follow-up discussions, reflecting deeper engagement and a growing confidence in the accessibility of the maritime administration.

Emphasis on Day-3 was placed on **hand-holding and reassurance**, especially for families of seafarers who sought clarity on long-term welfare, financial security, and emergency support mechanisms. DGS officers interacted patiently, explained procedures in simple language, and ensured that visitors left with a clear understanding of available support systems. The stall also continued the distribution of **utility-based welfare and awareness material**, reinforcing the



message that seafarer welfare extends beyond policy announcements to everyday, practical assistance.

Overall, the stall engagement on Day-3 reflected the human face of maritime governance, where listening, guidance, and presence mattered as much as regulation. The interactions underscored that the Directorate General of Shipping remains approachable, responsive, and committed to standing alongside seafarers and their families, even beyond the formal sessions of the Expo.

13.2 Address by Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde, Additional Director General of Shipping





On 31 January 2026, during the final day of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026**, **Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde, Additional Director General of Shipping**, addressed seafarers, their families, and maritime stakeholders at **Princess Dock, Mumbai**. His address formed a significant closing engagement of the Expo, reinforcing the Government of India’s continued and unwavering commitment to the welfare, dignity, and wellbeing of Indian seafarers.

In his address, Shri Khopde spoke about the central role played by seafarers in sustaining global trade and the national economy, acknowledging their sacrifices, resilience, and contribution to India’s maritime standing. He emphasised that the Directorate General of Shipping views seafarers not merely as a workforce, but as valued partners in the maritime ecosystem, whose safety, rights, and quality of life remain a priority at every level of policy and administration.

Shri Khopde highlighted various initiatives undertaken by the Directorate General of Shipping aimed at strengthening **seafarer welfare, safety standards, training quality, and regulatory transparency**. He spoke about ongoing efforts to improve working conditions onboard ships, enhance compliance with international conventions, and ensure that welfare schemes and grievance redressal mechanisms are accessible, responsive, and effective. Particular emphasis was placed on building trust between the maritime administration and seafarers through outreach, dialogue, and consistent engagement.

The address reflected a people-centric approach to maritime governance, underscoring that policy reforms and regulatory measures must ultimately translate into tangible benefits for seafarers and their families. Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde reiterated that the voices and experiences of seafarers are essential inputs in shaping future initiatives and that forums such as the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo play a crucial role in bridging the gap between policy intent and ground realities.



The interaction concluded with a message of reassurance and confidence, reaffirming that the **Directorate General of Shipping** remains committed to **strengthening support systems, enhancing welfare frameworks, and ensuring that seafarers continue to be heard, protected, and empowered.** The address provided a fitting and thoughtful close to the Day-3 engagements, leaving participants with a renewed sense of trust, partnership, and shared responsibility for the future of India's maritime sector.

13.3 Visit of the Additional Director General of Shipping



On **31 January 2026**, the final day of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026**, **Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde, IPS, Additional Director General of Shipping**, visited the Directorate General of Shipping stall and other key stalls at the Expo venue, **Princess Dock, Mumbai**. His visit formed an important part of the Day-3 engagements and provided an opportunity to directly observe and



interact with the welfare, awareness, and outreach activities being undertaken for seafarers.

During the visit, **Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde** engaged with officers and staff at the DGS stall and interacted with representatives from maritime unions, industry bodies, welfare organisations, and training institutions. He reviewed the initiatives being showcased, including information dissemination on **seafarer welfare schemes, social security benefits, recruitment safeguards, safety awareness, and grievance redressal mechanisms**. The interactions reflected a constructive exchange of views on strengthening compliance, enhancing outreach, and ensuring that welfare measures effectively reach seafarers and their families.

The visit also highlighted the importance of **collaboration between the maritime administration and industry stakeholders** in building a supportive and transparent maritime ecosystem. Discussions during the stall interactions focused on improving awareness among seafarers, reinforcing ethical recruitment practices, and enhancing institutional support systems for safety, training, and employment.

The presence of the Additional Director General of Shipping on the final day reinforced the **institutional commitment of DG Shipping to proactive engagement, transparent governance, and continuous improvement**. The visit served as a strong message that seafarer welfare remains a priority at all levels of the maritime administration and that sustained dialogue with stakeholders is essential for strengthening trust, compliance, and long-term outcomes in the maritime sector.



13.4 Medical Awareness for Seafarers: Health and Medical Preparedness



On **31 January 2026**, during the concluding day of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026**, a comprehensive session on **Medical Awareness for Seafarers** was conducted at **Princess Dock, Mumbai**, reaffirming the central role of health, fitness, and medical preparedness in ensuring safety and sustainability in the maritime profession. The session was jointly addressed by **Captain Nitin Mukesh, Deputy Nautical Adviser-cum-Senior Deputy Director General of Shipping (Tech/Crew)** and **Captain Bipin Kumar, Nautical Surveyor-cum-Deputy Director General (Tech), Directorate General of Shipping**. The session was attended by **Captain S. I. Abul Kalam Azad, Nautical Advisor (I/c), Directorate General of Shipping**, who was formally facilitated in recognition of his contribution to maritime safety and administration.



The session focused on the **unique medical challenges faced by seafarers**, arising from prolonged periods at sea, limited access to shore-based medical facilities, demanding work environments, and high physical and mental stress. Capt Nitin Mukesh emphasised that medical fitness is not merely a statutory requirement but a critical safeguard for individual seafarers, shipboard colleagues, and the vessel itself. He highlighted that early detection of health issues, routine monitoring, and timely medical intervention significantly reduce the risk of on board medical emergencies and contribute to safer ship operations.



Capt Bipin Kumar provided a detailed overview of the recent amendments to the seafarer medical examination framework, explaining the intent and scope of these reforms. He outlined how the revised rules aim to strengthen transparency, uniformity, and accountability in medical certification by introducing clearer standards, enhanced oversight of approved medical examiners, and stricter compliance mechanisms. The session explained that these measures are designed to protect seafarers from inconsistent assessments, unethical practices, and unnecessary career disruptions, while ensuring alignment with international medical standards prescribed under the **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006**.

The officers also addressed common concerns raised by seafarers regarding medical validity, re-examinations, and appeal mechanisms. Seafarers were



encouraged to remain informed about their medical status, maintain accurate health records, and seek timely guidance from authorised medical practitioners and the Directorate General of Shipping in case of any ambiguity or grievance. The importance of lifestyle management, mental wellbeing, and preventive healthcare was also highlighted as essential components of long-term fitness at sea.

The presence of **Capt S. I. Abul Kalam Azad**, Nautical Advisor-cum-Deputy Director General (Technical), added depth to the session, reinforcing the integrated approach adopted by the Directorate General of Shipping, where technical safety, medical preparedness, and regulatory oversight function together to safeguard seafarers' lives and careers.

The session concluded with a strong reassurance that DG Shipping remains deeply committed to seafarer health and wellbeing, and that medical regulations are continuously reviewed and strengthened to balance safety, fairness, and compassion. By demystifying medical rules and engaging directly with seafarers, the interaction fostered confidence, clarity, and trust in the medical certification system, underscoring that a healthy seafarer is the foundation of a safe and resilient maritime sector.



13.5 Role of International Cooperation: Aligning Global Safety Standards with Seafarers' Realities



On 31 January 2026, during the final day of the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026**, the **Directorate General of Shipping**, through its **International Cooperation Branch**, conducted a detailed and forward-looking session on the **Role of International Cooperation in Maritime Safety**, with a focus on aligning global standards with the real-world conditions faced by seafarers at sea. The session underscored India's active and substantive engagement at



international forums, particularly the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)**, to ensure that global maritime regulations remain practical, human-centric, and responsive to emerging challenges.

The session highlighted the mandate and functioning of the **International Maritime Organization**, which develops international regulations for maritime safety, environmental protection, and seafarer training through conventions such as **SOLAS, STCW, MARPOL, and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006**. It was explained that India, as one of the world's largest suppliers of seafarers, plays a crucial role in shaping these global frameworks by bringing operational realities and seafarer experiences into international policy discussions

A key focus of the session was **India's role at the IMO in strengthening the STCW Convention framework**, particularly in the context of rapid technological change and evolving shipboard operations. The presentation outlined India's contributions towards **modernising competence standards**, including proposals on digitalisation of training, balanced use of high-fidelity simulators alongside mandatory sea service, integration of cybersecurity awareness, and updating Knowledge, Understanding, and Proficiency (KUP) requirements to reflect modern vessel technologies. Emphasis was placed on retaining sea service as a core element of training, while allowing simulation only to a reasonable extent, thereby safeguarding practical competence.

The session also addressed **environmental stewardship and sustainability**, highlighting India's inputs on preparing seafarers for alternative fuels such as LNG, methanol, and hydrogen, green shipping practices, ballast water management, and emission control. These initiatives were presented as essential not only for environmental compliance but also for ensuring that seafarers are adequately trained to operate safely in a rapidly decarbonising maritime industry.



A significant portion of the session focused on **human-centric safety**, reflecting India's strong advocacy for seafarer welfare at international forums. India's contribution to introducing a new mandatory STCW competence on **prevention of violence and harassment**, including sexual harassment and bullying, was highlighted as a major step toward strengthening on board dignity and safety, with the provisions set to enter into force in 2026. The session also discussed India's proposals addressing mental health, fatigue, isolation, and social integration at sea, including the promotion of holistic wellbeing practices such as yoga, aligning closely with national initiatives like **Sagar Mein Yog** and **Sagar Mein Samman**.

The presentation further detailed India's international efforts to **combat fraudulent recruitment, abandonment, and piracy-related issues**, including proposals to amend provisions of the MLC, 2006, strengthen the IMO–ILO Joint Abandonment Database with identifiable seafarer details, ensure continuation of wages during captivity, and clarify jurisdictional protections for seafarers. India's advocacy for trainee berths on board ships was also highlighted as a strategic intervention to address global officer shortages and ensure sustainable manpower development.

The session concluded by presenting India's **lifecycle approach to maritime governance**, which views seafarer welfare holistically from recruitment and training, to on board life, and post-career or crisis support. Through sustained international engagement, India reaffirmed its commitment not only to protecting its own seafarers but also to contributing constructively to the **safety, dignity, and sustainability of the global maritime workforce**. The session reinforced DG Shipping's role as an active and responsible maritime administration, committed to shaping international regulations that truly reflect the lived realities of seafarers at sea.



13.6 Legal Framework and Statutory Foundations of Sagar Mein Samman



At the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026, **Ms Rehana Dhawade, Legal Consultant**, Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) conducted a comprehensive and legally grounded session on the **legal dimensions of Sagar Mein Samman (Honour at Sea)**, positioning the initiative not merely as a welfare programme but as a **rights-based regulatory framework** embedded in India’s constitutional, statutory, and international obligations.

The session, delivered under the aegis of the **International Cooperation and Legal Policy framework of DGS**, explained that *Sagar Mein Samman* is a



flagship draft policy framework issued by the Directorate General of Shipping vide **DGS Order No. I-8 of 2024 dated 25 November 2024**, with the express objective of integrating women's constitutional and statutory rights into maritime governance. It was emphasised that the initiative moves beyond symbolic advocacy and instead establishes **clear legal entitlements, enforceable duties, and institutional accountability** across the maritime ecosystem.

Participants were sensitised to the fact that *Sagar Mein Samman* draws its legitimacy directly from the **Constitution of India**, particularly:

- **Article 14** (Equality before Law),
- **Article 15** (Prohibition of Discrimination),
- **Article 16** (Equality of Opportunity in Employment), and
- **Article 51A** (Fundamental Duties and Human Dignity).

In addition, the initiative is reinforced by contemporary criminal and safety legislation, including provisions of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, which address sexual harassment, assault, voyeurism, stalking, and offences against dignity. The session further highlighted alignment with **special protective legislations for women**, such as the **POSH Act, 2013**, the **Maternity Benefit Act (Amended, 2017)**, the **Domestic Violence Act, 2005**, and wage-equity provisions under the **Code on Wages**.

A key focus of the session was the shift from voluntarism to **clearly defined institutional responsibilities**. DGS outlined that:

- **Regulatory oversight and monitoring** rest with the Directorate General of Shipping,
- **Maritime Training Institutes (MTIs)** are mandated to incorporate gender-sensitive training modules,



- **Shipping companies and ship managers** are responsible for on board implementation and workplace compliance, and
- **Manning agencies** must ensure fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory recruitment practices.

Mandatory **Internal Complaints Committees**, confidential reporting systems, protection against retaliation, and periodic compliance audits were explained as core enforcement tools under *Sagar Mein Samman*, ensuring that grievance redressal mechanisms are accessible, credible, and effective.

The session also placed *Sagar Mein Samman* within a broader global context, noting its alignment with:

- The **ILO Maritime Labour Convention, 2006**,
- **CEDAW** obligations on elimination of discrimination against women,
- **IMO Strategic Plan 2024–2029**, and
- United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals**, particularly SDG-5 (Gender Equality) and SDG-8 (Decent Work).

By harmonising national maritime regulation with international labour and human-rights standards, *Sagar Mein Samman* positions India as a **progressive maritime administration** that balances safety, dignity, and competitiveness within the global shipping industry

The session concluded by underlining that *Sagar Mein Samman* represents a decisive shift **from aspiration to entitlement**. With defined monitoring mechanisms, reporting frameworks, and performance indicators, the initiative aims to achieve measurable outcomes by 2030, including increased participation and retention of women seafarers, reduced incidents of harassment, and stronger institutional systems across the maritime sector.



Through this legally robust framework, the Directorate General of Shipping reaffirmed its commitment to **gender equality, dignity at the workplace, and a seafarer-centric governance model**, reinforcing India's global maritime leadership through a clear and enforceable human-rights commitment.

13.7 Panel Discussion: - Recruitment – Know Your Rights: Promoting Safe and Ethical Recruitment



A focused panel discussion titled **“Recruitment – Know Your Rights”** was conducted at the **MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026**, with participation from the **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)**. The session was addressed by **Captain P. C. Meena, Nautical Surveyor-cum-Deputy Director General**



(Crew), Directorate General of Shipping, and was aimed at creating awareness among seafarers on **safe, transparent, and ethical recruitment practices**.

During the interaction, Captain P. C. Meena clearly and firmly emphasised that **no seafarer should ever pay money to agents or intermediaries for employment or placement**, reiterating that charging recruitment fees is illegal and exploitative. Seafarers were advised to remain vigilant against fraudulent recruitment practices and false promises, which often lead to financial loss, distress, and, in extreme cases, abandonment.

The session highlighted the importance of verifying the **validity of Recruitment and Placement Service Licence (RPSL) agencies and Maritime Training Institutes (MTIs)** through the official **DG Shipping website**, which regularly publishes updated lists of authorised and debarred entities. Seafarers were encouraged to engage only with approved organisations and to cross-check credentials before accepting any employment offer.

Captain P.C. Meena also drew attention to the **awareness videos and digital outreach initiatives** released by the DG Shipping Social Media Team, which provide practical guidance on identifying recruitment fraud, understanding employment documents, and safeguarding personal and professional interests. These resources were highlighted as easily accessible tools for empowering seafarers with knowledge.

The session reinforced **DG Shipping's zero-tolerance approach to unethical recruitment practices** and reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment to protecting seafarers through regulation, awareness, and enforcement. The interaction concluded with a strong message that informed seafarers are the first



line of defence against exploitation, and that transparency and awareness are essential to ensuring dignity, safety, and fairness in maritime employment.

13.8 Acknowledging the Efforts of Team DG Shipping



At the conclusion of the ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026, the collective efforts of **Team Directorate General of Shipping** were formally acknowledged in recognition of their sustained dedication and exemplary service throughout the three-day event at Princess Dock, Mumbai, held from 29 to 31 January 2026. The team played a central role in planning, coordination, and on-ground execution of a wide range of activities, including stall operations, technical sessions, welfare outreach, and stakeholder interactions. Officers and staff worked closely with seafarers, unions, international organisations, and industry representatives to disseminate accurate information on welfare schemes, regulatory processes, grievance redressal mechanisms, medical reforms, safety initiatives, and flagship programmes such as Sagar Mein Samman and Sagar Mein Yog. Their proactive engagement



ensured that seafarers and their families received clear guidance, timely assistance, and a welcoming interface with the administration. The acknowledgement reflected not only the operational success of DG Shipping's participation but also the spirit of public service, teamwork, and empathy demonstrated by the officers and staff, reinforcing DG Shipping's commitment to transparency, accessibility, and a people-centric approach to maritime governance.



14. Conclusion

The MILAAP – ITF Seafarers’ Expo 2026 emerged as a landmark platform that brought together policy, practice, and people at the heart of India’s maritime ecosystem. Over three meaningful days at Princess Dock, Mumbai, the Expo transformed into a living space of dialogue, learning, care, and collective resolve, where seafarers and their families were not just participants but the central focus of every conversation, session, and initiative.

The active and sustained participation of the **Directorate General of Shipping** reflected the Government of India’s deep and evolving commitment to the welfare, dignity, and empowerment of seafarers. From the inauguration of the DGS stall and the launch and rationalisation of welfare schemes, to technical sessions on safety, medical preparedness, examination reforms, ethical recruitment, abandonment, and international cooperation, the presence of DG Shipping ensured that regulatory intent translated into direct engagement and clarity for the seafaring community. Each interaction reinforced the message that seafarers are not merely regulated stakeholders, but valued partners in India’s maritime growth story.

The Expo stood out for its human-centric approach. Initiatives such as **Sagar Mein Samman, Sagar Mein Yog, PRANAAM, SWFS**, and **SPFO** were not presented as abstract schemes, but as lived assurances of care, respect, and long-term support. Sessions addressing mental wellbeing, gender inclusion, medical awareness, grievance redressal, and fair treatment at sea acknowledged the realities of life onboard ships and responded with empathy, structure, and solutions. The distribution of welfare information, digital resources, and practical guidance at the DGS stalls further ensured that awareness reached seafarers in a form that was accessible, useful, and lasting.



Equally significant was the spirit of collaboration that defined the Expo. The engagement between national regulators, international organisations, maritime unions, training institutions, and industry representatives demonstrated a shared understanding that seafarer welfare is a collective responsibility. Discussions on global standards, international cooperation, and ethical recruitment reaffirmed India's role as a responsible maritime administration that actively contributes to shaping safer, fairer, and more inclusive global shipping practices.



As the Expo concluded, it left behind more than reports and photographs. It strengthened trust between seafarers and the administration, deepened awareness of rights and responsibilities, and reaffirmed a common commitment to dignity at sea. The acknowledgement of Team DG Shipping underscored the importance of service-driven governance and the impact of sincere, on-ground engagement.

In essence, the MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026 was not just an event, but a reaffirmation of values. It reflected a shared belief that the strength of the maritime sector lies in the wellbeing of its seafarers, and that progress, when guided by empathy, inclusivity, and cooperation, creates lasting change. The Expo concluded with a renewed sense of purpose, carrying forward a collective promise to place seafarers at the heart of India's maritime future.